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J. W. Miller

English  
Composition  
& Essay-  
Writing



# English Composition & Essay-Writing

J. W. Miller

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# ENGLISH COMPOSITION

AND

## ESSAY-WRITING

WITH

MODEL ESSAYS, OUTLINES, ETC.

BY

JAS. WM. MILLER, M.A.

LUNGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

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## PREFACE.

"Reading maketh a full man; conference, a ready man;  
and writing, an exact man."

—BACON.

THE recent reports from the University Examiners reveal the fact that the very important subject of English Composition presents serious difficulties to candidates; the standard of marks attained being very low. It is a subject by which the results of sound teaching may be most effectually tested, and the power of thought and expression acquired by the student best exhibited.

It is not, therefore, a matter of surprise that special importance is attached to English Composition at all our public examinations.

An attempt to do for the subject what has already been so abundantly done for Latin, and French Composition, is made in the present book. As will be seen from a glance at the contents, the aim of the author is to instruct by example rather than by mere precept.

J. W. M.



# CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	ix
CHAPTER I.	
DEFINITIONS . . . . .	1
(a) Punctuation . . . . .	7
(1) Grammatical Points . . . . .	7
(2) Rhetorical Points . . . . .	8
(b) The Use of Capital Letters . . . . .	12
(c) Common Grammatical Errors . . . . .	18
CHAPTER II.	
WORDS . . . . .	21
(a) Choice of Words . . . . .	24
(b) Propriety in the Use of Words . . . . .	26
(c) Figures of Speech . . . . .	29
CHAPTER III.	
THE SENTENCE . . . . .	34
(a) The Elements of a Sentence . . . . .	35
(b) Logical Analysis . . . . .	35
(c) Various kinds of Sentences . . . . .	37
(d) Unity of Thought . . . . .	41
CHAPTER IV.	
THE PARAGRAPH . . . . .	45
(a) Length of Paragraph . . . . .	45
(b) Connecting Link between Paragraphs . . . . .	48
(c) Newspaper Paragraphs . . . . .	49

## CHAPTER V.

	PAGE
THE WHOLE COMPOSITION . . . . .	51
(a) How to approach a Subject . . . . .	54
(b) The Search for Ideas . . . . .	54
(c) Formation of a Plan . . . . .	56
(d) Recapitulation and Summary . . . . .	58

## CHAPTER VI.

DIFFERENT STYLES OF WRITING . . . . .	61
(a) Descriptive . . . . .	61
(b) Narrative . . . . .	71
(c) Expositive . . . . .	72
(d) Argumentative . . . . .	74
(e) Letter Writing . . . . .	75

## CHAPTER VII.

PARAPHRASING . . . . .	78
(a) Meaning, Value and Purpose . . . . .	78
(b) Rules and Examples . . . . .	79

## CHAPTER VIII.

MISCELLANEOUS . . . . .	84
(a) Notes for Students . . . . .	84
(1) Method of Reading . . . . .	84
(2) Method of Practice . . . . .	85
(b) Hints to Teachers . . . . .	86
(1) Choice of Subjects . . . . .	86
(2) Correction of Essays . . . . .	87
(c) Model Essays and Outlines . . . . .	88
(d) List of Subject for Essays . . . . .	109

## INTRODUCTION.

**Literary Composition** is the art of putting our thoughts into correct and graceful language, so as to convey them to others clearly and pleasingly. Three conditions, it is evident, are here necessary :—

1. We must have ideas to express.
2. We must express them by means of the correct words.
3. We must arrange our words, our sentences, and our paragraphs in the right order.

Without something to say, we cannot of course put it into words. If we use the wrong words we shall not succeed in making the reader understand what we mean. And if we are not careful in ordering our words, sentences, and paragraphs, we shall weary and puzzle our reader, and thus violate some of the chief requirements of a good composition, which should be concise, lucid and pleasant to read.

**Where Ideas are to be Found.**—It is not the business of a work on Composition to supply the student with thoughts. These he must derive, in the main, from :—

1. His other studies, such as history, literature, geography, etc.
2. His own observation of things.
3. His conversation with his fellow students and others.
4. His general reading outside college and school hours.

At the same time we shall see that a knowledge of the principles of good writing will prove helpful in *suggesting* ideas ; and of course the power of an idea is greatly strengthened when it is clothed in proper language.

**How far Composition can be Taught.**—As to the other two conditions of which mention has been made, namely, the correct use of language and the accurate formation and arrangement of sentences and paragraphs—these *can* be taught, and it will be our object in the following pages to lay down the rules for their acquisition.

Let not the young student deceive himself with the notion that to write good English is an easy matter. It is no such thing. This illusion, which is a common one, is fostered by the reading of authors like Goldsmith or Scott, who write so *naturally* (as we say), that it seems indeed the result of nature, not of art. It is not so, however; for it is a mark of the results of the most perfect art to have an air of ease about them as if they had come without labour. On the other hand, it is not meant that we can all learn to write with the charm of Goldsmith by mastering a set of mechanical rules. This would be equally untrue. But a knowledge of the principles of Composition will teach every one—and it is a power by no means to be despised—to express in clear and correct language whatever he wishes to convey to others. We can neglect the cultivation of this power only at the risk of missing whatever influence, whether for our own advantage or for that of others, we might hope to exercise by what we write. The higher and the finer effects of style—the beautiful grace and delicacy of Lamb, the picturesque power of Macaulay, the eloquence of Burke—cannot be taught. These are the personal and incommunicable gifts of individuals. What we can all hope to attain by a knowledge of, and attention to, the rules of rhetoric is a command of clear, correct English and a power of interesting our readers in what we write.

**Plan of this Book.**—In the present little work there is a prefatory chapter of Definitions, with two sub-sections, the first devoted to the important question of Punctuation, and the second to Common Grammatical Errors. In reference to the second sub-section, it is to be noted that it does not aim at taking the place of the grammar lesson, or even at supplying the elements of

English grammar. It is inserted merely to warn the young student against certain errors which are frequently met with in the essays of beginners, and which mar the value of what is in other respects often a good Composition. The subjects of Paraphrasing, and Précis-writing, are fully dealt with in Chapters VII. and VIII.

We shall, then, treat in due order, Words, Sentences, Paragraphs, and the whole Composition : thus following the natural growth of an essay. The plan of the present work may be tabulated as follows :—

1. Definitions.
2. Words.
3. The Sentence.
4. The Paragraph.
5. The Whole Composition.
6. Different Styles of Writing.
7. Paraphrasing.
8. Miscellaneous.



## CHAPTER I.

### DEFINITIONS.

A FEW of the leading terms with which we shall have to deal in the following pages may profitably be defined. The student may not grasp the full meaning of some of them till a later stage; but it seems best to make him familiar with them from the start. A fuller treatment of each point will be given later.

A **Sentence** may be defined as a group of words expressing a complete thought by means of a subject and a predicate, with their modifying words. "Man is mortal." "The wise man fears not death." "Self-preservation is the first rule of every community."

**Unity of the Sentence.**—The *unity* of the sentence is an important point. The sentence should make one distinct main statement about one object of thought, otherwise it will make a confused impression on the reader's mind.

The following is an example of a sentence faulty in this respect:—

"Their march was through an uncultivated country, whose savage inhabitants fared hardly, having no other riches than a breed of lean sheep, whose flesh was rank and unsavoury, by reason of their continued feeding upon sea-fish."

In this clumsy and ill-constructed sentence, the reader is confused between the four different assertions, *viz.* : (1) The march (of the Greeks); (2) the hard fare of the inhabitants of the country through which they were marching; (3) the quality of their sheep; (4) the reason why the mutton was unsavoury. This is a type of sentence that is very common with young writers.

They bring together the most widely separated ideas, as if every combination of words which is contained between the initial capital letter and the final stop is a satisfactory sentence. Nothing is further from the truth, and no error serves more to confuse and weary the reader, and blur the impression which the writer wishes to make.

In almost every student's composition a sentence on this model will occasionally be met with:—

"Mozart, when a boy, was very precocious, and seemed to master all the principles of music without effort; and once, when he was in Rome, he wrote out from memory the score of a mass that he heard sung in the Sistine Chapel."

These statements should be divided in some such manner as the following:—

"Mozart was, as a boy, very precocious. He seemed to master all the principles of music without effort. On one occasion, during a visit to Rome, he actually wrote out from memory the score of a mass that he heard sung in the Sistine Chapel."

NOTE.—Never use the word "and" to connect words that do not go to make up a single statement. Do not write such a sentence as this:—

"George Washington was the deliverer of America, and he would never tell a lie, and he was elected President of the United States in 1789, and he is buried at Mount Vernon."

The essence of a true sentence, then, is *that it should make one distinct statement*. This, of course, does not restrict the *length* of a sentence. A good sentence may contain three or thirty words indifferently so long as there is but *one* main statement in it. And there may be many modifying words, so long as only one statement or predication is made. The following sentence from Cardinal Newman is an admirably constructed one, though it contains close on eighty words:—

"As, when a man is given over, he may die at any moment, yet lingers; as an implement of war may at any moment explode, and must at some time; as we

listen for a clock to strike, and at length it surprises us ; as a crumbling arch hangs, we know not how, yet it is not safe to pass under: *so creeps on this feeble, weary world ; and one day, before we know where we are, it will end.*"

The clause in italics contains the one main statement in this sentence, to which all the preceding clauses hold a subordinate relation. And it is, of course, quite lawful thus to modify the main thought in any sentence by qualifications, or, as they are called, enlargements of the subject, object and predicate. Take, as an example, the simple sentence:—

"Girls love cats"—

and notice how it remains the only complete statement in the following variations:—

"*The good girls love the white cats.*"

"*The good girls of the village, who have kind feelings, love greatly the white cats that they play with.*" And so on.

**Value of Parsing and Analysis of Sentences.**—The value of the exercises of parsing and analysing sentences is that they show the student the one main thought of the sentence by separating it from the qualifications of one kind or another which ordinarily accompany it. One of the most remarkable scientific men of the last century, Professor T. H. Huxley, has told us that he regarded these exercises as the most useful part of his early education. They taught him how to think, to see exactly what thoughts were in the words he read. The exercise of analysis cannot be too much employed ; and its value will be increased by the occasional use of the reverse process of building up sentences from separate statements. Thus the sentences:—

"The boy was young. He lost his rabbit. It was a white rabbit. He lost it yesterday"—  
may be united into:—

"The young boy lost his white rabbit yesterday."

(The teacher can employ any number of varieties of this exercise which, as supplementary to analysis, will prove useful.)

**Kinds of Sentences.**—*Sentences* are either (1) *Simple*, or (2) formed of *combined* simple sentences. *Composite* sentences, as the latter are usually called, are either *compound* or *complex*. A *Simple sentence* is a sentence that contains only one subject and one predicate; as:—

“The mouse fears the cat.” “The boy loves study.”

Note, again, that the simple sentence is not restricted in *length*. Thus this sentence:—

“For somewhat more than four hundred years, the Roman Empire and the Christian Church, born into the world almost at the same moment, had been developing themselves side by side as two great rival powers, in deadly struggle for the possession of the human race” —

is but a *simple* sentence, whereas the sentence “James and I saw John” is a *compound* sentence: it is made up of the two sentences: “James saw John”; “I saw John”.

The Simple sentence consists of *one verb* and *no conjunction*. If it contains a conjunction it is not as a constituent *part of itself*, but as a link with preceding sentences or paragraphs.

**Combined Sentences.**—Two or more sentences may be combined to form a single sentence.

The sentences which are combined to form a new sentence are called **clauses** of the new sentence.

NOTE.—A clause has a complete sense in itself, and is thus distinguished from a *phrase*, which is a *group* of words not of itself making independent sense, and containing no finite verb. For instance, “Having regard to,” “with difficulty,” “being an enthusiast in science,” are phrases. Phrases, as members of a sentence, have the same effect and stand in the same relations as verbs, adjectives, nouns, or adverbs. It is, therefore, to be noted that the *phrase* has strictly a grammatical function, and consequently not every chance group of words is a phrase.

**Compound Sentences.**—When, in combining sentences, one sentence is joined to another to add a new and distinct statement to that made by the other, the

sentences are said to be *co-ordinate*, and the sentence formed by the combination is called a *compound sentence*. Thus:—

“The Romans were the greatest soldiers of antiquity; and they were also the most consummate statesmen”—is a compound sentence. Two distinct statements are here evidently made.

NOTE.—Co-ordinate sentences thus combined should have some natural connection with one another. Thus: “A light wind was blowing and the boat flew over the water,” is a natural combination; “A light wind was blowing, and the Prime Minister delivered an eloquent speech,” is incongruous.

**Co-ordination of Simple Sentences.**—The co-ordination of simple sentences in a compound sentence, may be of four kinds:—

1. *Copulative*, which is generally denoted by the conjunction *and*; as:—  
“He came and delivered his message.”
2. *Disjunctive*, which is generally denoted by *or*, *nor*, etc.; as:—  
“Either you or I must submit.”  
“Either you confess or I report you.”
3. *Adversative*, when *but* is employed; as:—  
“He liked pleasure, but preferred duty.”
4. *Inferential*, denoted by *for*, *therefore*, *because*; as:—  
“Summer is pleasant, for it brings warmth and light.”

NOTE 1.—Occasionally the relative adverbs *when*, *wherefore*, *whilst* join two co-ordinate sentences; as:—

“To-morrow we die; wherefore let us beware how we live.”

(*Wherefore* = “and therefore”.)

Sometimes, as in Cæsar’s famous boast, “I came, I saw, I conquered”—the co-ordination is understood and no conjunction is required. So in this sentence from a well-known author:—

“Life passes, riches fly away, popularity is fickle, the senses decay, the world changes, friends die.”

NOTE 2.—It is to be noted that sentences co-ordinated by *and* have often an *inferential* relation, as for instance:—

“He pays the piper *and* he calls the tune”—where the meaning is “*and therefore*”.

**Complex Sentences.**—When one sentence is added to another, not to make a new statement, but to explain or modify some word or words of that other, the added sentence is said to be *subordinate*, and the sentence formed by the combination is called a *complex sentence*. For example, “The King *who conquered Asia*, could not overcome himself,”—the italicized words form a subordinate clause, modifying the word “King”. “He ran quickly, *that he might get home first*.” Here the italicized clause is subordinate, explaining the purpose of his running.

**Subordination of Clauses.**—This subordination of one clause to another is of three kinds:—

1. *Adjectival*, as: “The whale is the largest of the animals *which are known to man*”. The subordinate clause here determines a kind of animals.
2. *Adverbial*, as: “I made all preparations for the journey *as soon as I heard of his illness*”. The italicized clause here fixes the *time* of the action.
3. *By a Noun clause*, as: “He saw *that the battle was lost*”. The italicized clause is equivalent to a substantive phrase, such as “the loss of the battle”.

It may be well to warn the student against the danger to the clearness, or even to the meaning, of a sentence which may arise from the wrong position of modifying words, phrases, or clauses. A modifying word, phrase, or clause is, in the vast majority of cases, an adjective or an adverb: that is to say, it qualifies some noun, or pronoun, or some verb, adjective or adverb in the sentence. As a general rule these *modifying words should be placed as near as possible to the words which they modify*. The neglect of this rule almost always in-

volves confusion. The following sentences are examples of this neglect (the correct form is given in the second column):—

Shakespeare was a remarkable man of genius.	Shakespeare was a man of remarkable genius.
Do you take the medicine I send you regularly?	Do you take regularly the medicine I send you?
The principle of the bill was only confirmed by a majority of one.	The principle of the bill was confirmed by a majority of only one.

These sentences are specimens of a very wide class of constructions in which a misplaced adjective or adverb renders the sense ambiguous. In the above examples, the confusion arises from misplacing single words; but what is true of single words is equally true of adjectival or adverbial clauses, however long. For example: "A brooch was lost representing Diana hunting in a Sea Point tramcar, on Saturday last," is made ambiguous by misplacing the phrase describing the brooch. •

A **Paragraph** is a connected series of sentences constituting the development of a single topic. The paragraph has a *unity* of its own no less than the sentence. It is generally, though by no means invariably, an expansion of the idea expressed in its opening sentence. The expansion is generally made by illustrating the main topic or contrasting it with something else.

#### (a) PUNCTUATION.

**Punctuation**, or the use of grammatical *points* (Lat. *punctum*—a point) is the device used in *written* compositions to indicate more clearly the grammatical relations of words in a sentence, or to establish a greater or less degree of separation between the related thoughts, as by division into sentences, clauses, and phrases.

The points in common use are nine in number:—

##### 1. Grammatical Points.

- |                           |   |   |   |     |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|-----|
| (a) Period, or Full Stop, | . | . | . | (.) |
| (b) Comma,                | . | . | . | (,) |
| (c) Semi-colon,           | . | . | . | (:) |

- (d) Colon, . . . . . (:)  
 (e) Hyphen, . . . . . (-)  
 (f) Apostrophe, . . . . . (')

## 2. Rhetorical Points.

- (a) Note of Interrogation, . . . . . (?)  
 (b) Note of Exclamation or Admiration, (!)  
 (c) Parenthesis or Brackets ( ) [ ], and occasionally  
 (d) Dash, . . . . . (—)  
 (e) Quotation marks, . . . . . (" ")

### 1. Grammatical Points.

(a) **The Period or Full Stop (.)**.—The period is used to indicate that the circuit of thought is complete, and that an assertion has been fully made. It is consequently placed at the end of all completed sentences, whether simple or compound.

NOTE.—The full stop is also used:—

1. To mark an abbreviation or initial, *e.g.* Right Hon. J. Morley, M.A.
2. After Roman numerals in personal titles, *e.g.* Charles IX., Louis XIV.

(b) **The Comma (,)**.—The comma marks the place where the voice would naturally pause in reading aloud. It denotes the shortest pause, and groups words immediately related in grammar or sense. The use of commas has considerably diminished in recent years, and the student must not be too lavish with them. At the same time, where any ambiguity might exist, it is better to err on the side of over-punctuation.

The chief uses of the comma are:—

1. When the conjunction *and* is omitted from a series of adjectives, nouns, or verbs, the omission is supplied by commas, *e.g.*:—
  - (a) "The old man is kind, good, faithful and honest."
  - (b) "Romans, countrymen, and lovers!"
  - (c) "He fumes, he frets, he scorns to die."
2. In general, when any phrase is but loosely connected with the rest of the sentence—a rule

which includes cases of (a) *direct address*, (b) *apposition*, (c) *absolute participial phrase*, (d) *qualifying or restrictive phrase*, e.g. :—

- (a) *Direct address*.—"Richard, come here."  
"O Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo!"  
"Are you, sir, anxious to study?"
- (b) *Apposition*.—"William, the Norman conqueror of England." "Rome, the city of the Emperors, became the city of the Popes."  
"Hannibal, the greatest general of antiquity, was defeated by the Romans."
- (c) *Absolute participial phrase*.—"Having viewed the surrounding scenery, they sat down to luncheon." "The appointed day having come, everything was in readiness."
- (d) *Qualifying or restrictive phrase*.—"Sailors, who are generally superstitious, say it is unlucky to embark on a Friday." "He came, however, in time to catch the train." "His story was, in several ways, improbable."  
"In truth, I am wearied of his importunities."

(c) **Semi-colon (;)**.—The semi-colon marks a greater division than the comma, but a closer connection between the clauses it separates than exists between those divided by a colon.

1. It generally marks off co-ordinate sentences that have some close connection, e.g. :—

"But on the third night, flames were seen rising from the camp; and when the first of August dawned, a line of smoking ruins marked the site lately occupied by the huts of the besiegers; and the citizens saw far off the long columns of men and standards retreating down the left bank of the river towards the city."

2. Contrasted or explanatory clauses introduced by such words as *but*, *for*, etc., are preceded by a semi-colon :—

"Fame is fickle; but virtue is an enduring good."

"Shun sin; for it ultimately wrecks body and soul."

"Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit."

(d) **Colon (:)—**The colon is used to mark a larger pause than that indicated by the semi-colon.

1. It is used before an enumeration or specification of the points of a general statement, *e.g.* :—

"The names of the political parties are as follows :  
Conservatives, Liberals, Progressives, Independents, Radicals, Socialists."

"Three things are necessary to success: knowledge, prudence, and virtue."

2. To introduce a formal quotation, *e.g.* :—

"In a well-known passage, Byron writes :—

"and dear the schoolboy spot

We ne'er forget, though we are there forgot."

or :—

"We all know Pope's line :—

"A little learning is a dangerous thing."

(e) **The Hyphen (-).**—The hyphen is used to show that two or more words are to be considered as connected into one—*e.g.* book-case, head-stone, school-room—and to connect syllabic elements, as where a word is divided at the end of a line.

**NOTE.**—There is much confusion and inconsistency in English as to the use of the hyphen in the formation of compounds. Thus, in the best authors you will find compounds like bare-backed, water-course, middle-finger, written indifferently with or without the hyphen.

In regard to dividing words at the end of a line, young students are apt to separate a word at the wrong place. The division should be made only at the end of a syllable. To know where each syllable of a word ends it is usually necessary to know the derivation of the word. Thus, the word "component" should be divided *com-ponent* or *compon-ent*, not *comp-onent*; *dis-gusting*, *anti-dote*, are other examples of correct division of words.

(f) **Apostrophe (')** is a symbol above the line, usually

intended to mark the omission of a letter, syllable or figure, *e.g.* *I've* for "I have"; '98 for "1798"; *won't* for "will not".

The main uses of the apostrophe are:—

1. To indicate the possessive case, *e.g.* a lady's bicycle, a month's holiday, workmen's cottages.
2. To note the omission of a letter or figure, *e.g.* *o'er* (over); '90 (1890); *tho'* (though); 'tis (it is); *I'm* (I am).
3. To denote the plural of figures, letters, and symbols, *e.g.* 5's; "cross your t's".

## 2. Rhetorical Points.

(a) **Note of Interrogation (?)** is used to indicate a direct question:—

"Who is that?" "He said: 'Are you there?'"

In the case of an *indirect* question, *e.g.*, "He asked how large it was," there is, of course, no need for a note of interrogation.

(b) **Note of Exclamation or Admiration (!)** is used to mark the expression of some emotion, surprise, reverence, fear, etc., *e.g.*:—

"Hark! the clock strikes." "Vital spark of heavenly flame!" "O death! where is thy victory?"

(c) **Parenthesis or Brackets ( ) [ ]** are used to mark a phrase abruptly thrown into the midst of a sentence to help in elucidating the subject, or to add force to an assertion or argument, *e.g.*:—

"And that mysterious lady, who never revealed her face (except to me in dreams), but always acted by delegation, had her name from the Latin verb [as still it is the Italian verb], *levare*, to raise aloft."

Note the two forms of the parenthesis. The square brackets [ ] are employed to mark insertions, by an editor or translator, in the text with which he is dealing.

(d) **A Dash (—)** indicates an abrupt change of thought:—

"If thou beest he—but oh! how fallen!"

"All this is excellent—upon paper."

"Courage—such courage as Turks have—he was not devoid of."

(e) **Quotation Marks** (" ") are used to enclose a phrase or sentence which is quoted:—

Turning to his friends, he said: "I die willingly because I die in a good cause".

If the quotation is interrupted, each part of it is enclosed by inverted commas, *e.g.*:—

"I cannot," said the old man, "recall a single instance."

A quotation within a quotation is indicated by single marks only, thus:—

Mr. Bright, speaking, said: "I am always impressed when I survey this world of ours which the poet rightly calls 'a stage,' and 'all its men and women merely players,' with the disparity between the vastness of our desires and the poor realities with which we must needs be content".

#### (b) THE USE OF CAPITAL LETTERS.

Capital letters must be used:—

1. At the beginning of every complete sentence.
2. To mark a proper name or a title.
3. At the beginning of a direct quotation.
4. For the personal pronoun I; and for O, in vocative case: "Know then, O King".
5. To mark the names of God, and pronouns standing for these: "Thy name, O Lord".
6. In cases of personification of objects.

The best way to learn correct punctuation is to write from dictation some passage in which dialogue occurs, inserting the stops as you proceed, and then to compare what you have written with the printed text. To pupils in a school, a passage may be given from which stops and capital letters have been omitted, and these they may be required to insert. This exercise has not the drawback involved in the practice of putting before them faulty spellings for correction—a practice which accustoms the eye to the forms of misspelt words, and thus helps to induce a habit of bad spelling. Shakespeare

has given a good example of the way in which an illiterate man, by paying no attention to the stops, reverses the meaning of what he reads. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, he makes a labouring man come in and recite a prologue as follows:—

“If we offend, it is with our goodwill.

That you should think we come not to offend,

But with goodwill. To show our simple skill,

That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider, then, we come but in despite.

We do not come as minding to content you,

Our true intent is. All for your delight,

We are not here. That you should here repent  
you

The actors are at hand; and, by their show,

You shall know all that you are like to know.”

This was how the “hempen homespun” spoke it.

Here is how *he* meant to speak it:—

“If we offend, it is with our goodwill

That you should think we come *not* to offend;

But with goodwill to show our simple skill.

That is the true beginning of our end.

Consider, then. We come: but in despite

We do not come. As, minding to content you,

Our true intent is all for your delight.

We are not here that you should here repent you.

The actors are at hand; and, by their show,

You shall know all that you are like to know.”

#### (c) COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS.

A knowledge of the rules of English grammar, and a thorough mastery of their correct application, are essential to success in English composition. The mere avoidance of grammatical errors will not, it is true, make an essay perfect, but, on the other hand, without attention to the recognised laws of correct usage, it is impossible to write with clearness and precision. The student, then, will do well to make himself familiar with the

elements of English grammar by the study of some approved text-book. In this chapter, only those grammatical forms which need caution on account of their frequent misuse can be considered.

For the sake of clearness and order it seems well to take the various Parts of Speech separately.

**The Article.**—Remember that the articles “a” and “the” when prefixed to a series of nouns or adjectives serve to bind them into one group; while an article for each has the opposite effect of distributing them. An example will make this clear: “Wanted a nurse and housemaid” means that the same person is to be both; while “A nurse and a housemaid are required for a gentleman’s family” obviously refers to two separate persons.

The articles should, then, be repeated whenever they introduce nouns or adjectives referring to distinct things.

Note, however, that in such sentences as “Cromwell was said to be a tyrant, a murderer, and an usurper,” or “of Tennyson’s works *the* longest and *the* most artistic is *the Idylls of the King*,” the repetition of the article is used merely to emphasise the predicate, and does not affect the unity of the subject.

**The Noun.**—The student should be careful in the use of foreign or irregular plurals. Such words as *datum*, *phenomenon*, *species*, *genus*, *analysis*, and so forth, retain their foreign plurals in English, and become, respectively, *data*, *phenomena*, *species*, *genera*, *analyses*. Many nouns of this class, however, have become so assimilated to English usage that the use of an English plural is legitimate. Thus we find *cherubs*, *dogmas*, *formulas*. The student may be advised to be sparing in his use of foreign words in his composition. The cases in which an appropriate English word cannot be found are extremely rare; and a sprinkling of such foreign phrases as one finds at the end of most dictionaries only disfigures an essay.

**Plurals of Compound Words.**—With regard to the plurals of compound words, the general rule is that the plural sign is affixed to the main or important part of the compound: thus we have *mothers-in-law*, *poets-laureate*,

*maid-servants*. Such forms as *spoonfuls*, *shovelfuls* are correct, because the words are not in the present form to be regarded as compounds.

Notice that in such compound words as *courts-martial*, *knights-templar*, *rates-in-aid*, the plural sign is attached to the main substantive.

**Plural Wanting.**—Plurality is, properly speaking, the attribute only of those things that are capable of number, that is, of things *concrete*. It follows that there is no plural of an abstract word; consequently when we use such an expression as “the *beauties* of the queen’s court,” the singular of this word is not “beauty,” but “a beauty,” which is a concrete expression.

**Number of Collective Nouns.**—Collective nouns such as *jury*, *fleet*, *public*, occasionally cause some difficulty in regard to their number. If they are used in their collective sense, that is to say, if the idea expressed by them is regarded as a unit, they naturally take a singular verb, e.g., “The *fleet was* ordered to Crete”; “A nation is capable of crime as well as an individual”. On the other hand, if the collection is taken distributively, and the emphasis is thrown on the individual actions of the persons included under it, it must be regarded as plural: “The public *are* requested to observe order”; “A large class of observers *regard* this phenomenon as incomprehensible”.

Note that the title of a book, e.g. *Gulliver’s Travels*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, no matter what the words which make it up, is treated as singular. Thus “*Gulliver’s Travels is* Swift’s masterpiece”. Also any word, treated merely as a word, though plural, should be followed by a verb in the singular: e.g., “‘Phenomena’ *is* a Greek plural”; “‘Spoonfuls’ *is* the correct plural of ‘spoonful’”.

**General Remark.**—Great care should be taken in making the verb agree in *number* with its nominative case. Note the errors in the following sentences: “Presently *was* heard from within the city walls the *cries* of women and children.” “The *fact* that several bodies of soldiers were approaching the walls *were* not

noticed by the besieged." "The *general*, together with several of his bravest officers, *were* killed in the attack." "Either the master *or* the servant *are* to blame." "The *king*, as well as the peasant, *have* to die."

**Possessive Case.**—The *Possessive Case* presents some difficulties. In general its use ought to be restricted to (1) persons, *e.g.*, "my brother's book," "Swift's romance"; and (2) to expressions like "a day's journey," "without a moment's delay," in which the notion of time is conveyed. Possessives of the nature of "England's history," "the vessel's escape," are contrary to the best usage, and should be avoided.

Distinguish the double possessive "He was a friend of my father's," meaning "he was one of my father's friends," and the forms, "He was my father's friend," and "He was a friend of my father". Also carefully note the distinction between the construction: (1) a possessive pronoun or the possessive case of a noun prefixed to the gerund or participial noun; and (2) a noun or pronoun followed by a qualifying participle, *e.g.* :—

1. The fear of the soldiers' crossing the river excited the village.
2. The fear of the soldiers crossing the river excited the laughter of the village.

**Adjectives.**—When *two* persons or things are compared it is proper to use the comparative degree (though there is a tendency to relax this rule). The use of the superlative in this case is a common error. Thus we find such erroneous sentences as: "That's the *best* dog of the two," "It is doubtful whether Hannibal or Napoleon was the *greatest* general," where "better" and "greater" should be used instead of the italicized words.

The superlative is correctly used where more than two persons or things are spoken of.

**Either, Neither, etc.**—It should be carefully noted that the words *either*, *neither*, *the former*, *the latter* cannot be used to refer to more than *two* persons or objects. When more than two are spoken of, use respectively, *any*, *none*, *the first*, *the last*. Thus: "He was healthier than *either* of his three friends," should read "than

any"; and "Of John, James and William, the *latter* alone is clever," should of course read the "the *last*" or "the *last named*".

**Adjectives without Comparative Forms.**—Do not compare adjectives like *perfect*, *unique*, *square*, which, from their meaning, do not admit of degrees of the quality expressed. Such expressions as "very accurate," "much rounder," "honester than his friend," though frequently met with, are not correct, unless where the adjectives are not used in a strictly literal sense.

Expressions like "more preferable," "more superior," "most supreme," are correct, because they are tautologous, involving a double comparison. So far as modern use is concerned, it is no justification than Shakespeare frequently employs double comparatives and superlatives.

The adverb *very* is not to be joined with a participle. Thus "*very* pleased" is not so correct as "*much* pleased"; and still further removed from good usage is "*very* obliged," "*very* disappointed".

**Verbs.**—Do not, as is too often done, confuse the Past Tense and Past Participle of verbs. Such sentences as "The children have *forgot* their books"; "The labourer *done* his work early"; "The pony was *stole* from the field"; "Who has *rang* the bell?" "I *done* all my lessons," are examples of errors only too common. Replace the italicized words in the above by, respectively, "forgotten," "did," "stolen," "rung," "did".

Care should be taken to connect the participle clearly and correctly with the term it qualifies. Thus: "*Speaking* to an old gardener about his flowers, *he* told me," etc., is incorrect, because the real subject of the participle, namely "I," is crowded out by another word. The sentence ought to run: "Speaking to an old gardener about his flowers, *I* was told by him," etc. Again: "*Having entered* the field, a bull rushed at us," is incorrect, because the participle does not belong to "bull". It should read: "Having entered the field, *we* were attacked by a bull".

**Shall and Will.**—The correct use of *shall* and *will* is

not easily stated in a brief space. The student will do well to remember that the original meaning of *shall* is "obligation, necessity" (*cf.* German, *sollen*), and of *will*, "desire, wish". It must also be recollected that *shall* is only a tense-auxiliary, that is, a sign of the future, in the first person. The following well-known lines express with sufficient clearness the distinctive uses of *shall* and *will*:—

In the first person simply *shall* foretells,  
In *will* a threat, or else a promise dwells:  
*Shall* in the second or the third contains a threat:  
*Will* simply then foretells a future feat.

A few illustrative examples are appended:—

- |    |  |   |
|----|--|---|
| 1. | { I shall be late<br>We shall be satisfied }             | Simple futurity expressed.                  |
| 2. | { I will ride<br>We will go }                            | Purpose or intention asserted.              |
| 3. | { Ye shall know the truth<br>He shall restore fourfold } | Threat or obligation or necessity involved. |
| 4. | { You will miss your train<br>It will rain to-morrow }   | Simple futurity expressed.                  |

In regard to the use of *will* and *shall* in questions, it is to be noted that "Will I go?" is improper, on account of the absurdity of asking what one's own intention is. The same objection, of course, holds in the case of the first person plural, "Will we go?" "Shall I go?" and "Shall we go?" are the correct forms.

**Sequence of Tenses.**—In the important matter of the *Sequence of Tenses*, mistakes are frequently made. The main principles which regulate the tense-relations of verbs may be briefly stated:—

1. A principal verb in the present tense should be followed by a present or future tense verb.

2. A verb in the past tense should be followed by another past tense verb.

Thus: "If you *are* good, you *will* be happy." "As we ascended the mountain, the valley *spread* out at our feet."

The principal tenses should be determined by the exact time of the action. For example, we should not

write: "Mr. A. *will be happy* to accept the Lord Mayor's invitation," but "is happy," because the acceptance is made here and now.

Universal truths, which in their nature are independent of time, are expressed only in the present tense, no matter in what tense facts associated with them may be. Thus, we say properly: "Kepler *discovered* that the planets *move* in elliptical orbits," not "moved"; or, "It *has always been* a question with me whether fiction *exerts* so great an influence over mankind as poetry," not "exerted".

**Historical Present.**—What is called the *Historical Present* lends considerable vividness to a narrative. It consists in the use of the present tense in describing events long since passed. For example: "Cæsar *steals* a march on the enemy during the night, and at day-break *is* more than twenty miles from their camp".

**Infinitive Tenses.**—The use of the infinitive after a principal verb is a matter of some importance. It should be in the present, without regard to the tense of the principal verb, when it expresses an action either future or contemporary at the time indicated by the principal verb. Thus: "We had hoped *to have gained* the open country," should be "to gain". "I intended *to have gone*" is wrong, because it makes the going precede the intention.

**The Subjunctive Mood** is now omitted from many English grammars as a needless and out-of-date refinement. Yet, when properly employed, it conveys a subtle distinction, and is used by the best authors. Take the two following sentences, in the first of which we have a subjunctive in each clause, and in the second two indicatives, and notice the different force of the moods in each:—

(a) "If he had done it, it *had been* better."

(b) "If he had loved her before, he now adored her."

The student will be well advised in using the subjunctive whenever there is any element of doubt or uncertainty as to a condition being fulfilled.

**Adverbs** should not be replaced by adjectives, as in the sentences: "He writes *neat*." "He walks *quick*."

**Prepositions.**—Many blunders are made in the use of *Prepositions* with other words. Thus, we should say, "different *from*," not "different *to*"; "sympathy *with*," not "sympathy *for*"; "angry *with*," not "angry *at*"; "frightened *at*," not "frightened *of*"; "to die *of* want," not "to die *for* want"; and so on.

There are many other grammatical solecisms which the novice is apt to fall into; but space does not allow of any fuller treatment of the subject here. As has already been said, this chapter is in no way meant as a substitute for the grammar lesson, and, consequently, the student cannot hope to find it exhaustive. What has been said, however, may direct his attention to the kinds of errors which are most common, and thereby sharpen his perception of other flaws in his compositions. In conclusion, it may be said that better and more profitable than the study of any set of rules for the avoidance of errors such as have been pointed out, is the careful and critical reading of the best authors. As listening to correct speakers unconsciously purifies our own language, so we glean from the perusal of classical works a feeling for, and appreciation of, good style.

## CHAPTER II

### WORDS.

ONE of the most important cares of the student who aims at acquiring a style at once clear, vigorous and picturesque, should be to cultivate a habit of observing words, of noting shades of meaning in words apparently synonymous, and of enriching his vocabulary by an attentive study of the best authors. Words are the symbols of thought. By them we communicate, whether in speech or writing, with our fellow beings. We must therefore employ them so that they shall accurately and vividly suggest the ideas we attach to them. We must economise our readers' or hearers' attention by so presenting ideas that they can be understood with the least possible mental effort. So important is this consideration that Mr. Herbert Spencer, in a valuable essay on "*The Philosophy of Style*," reduces all the maxims and laws of good writing to this one principle of making the least possible demand on the reader's attention. "A reader or listener," writes Mr. Spencer, "has at each moment but a limited amount of mental power available. To recognise and interpret the symbols presented to him requires part of this power; to arrange and combine the images suggested requires a further part; and only that part which remains can be used for realising the thought conveyed. Hence the more time and attention it takes to receive and understand each sentence, the less time and attention can be given to the contained idea; and the less vividly will that idea be conceived."

It is for this reason that certain significant gestures convey an idea more vividly, because more directly, than

words. Thus to point to the door is more emphatic than to say, "Leave the room". Placing a finger on the lips is more expressive than "Do not speak". A shrug of the shoulders or a raising of the eyebrows often suggests more of indifference or surprise than the most elaborate speech. The advantage of economising the reader's attention is illustrated by the greater vividness of concrete terms as compared with abstract words. To every thought which we have corresponds a picture in our *imagination*, and the thought, when present to our intellect, is always accompanied by an image or picture.

It follows from this psychological law that language which immediately suggests pictorial or concrete views of things saves us a stage in our mental process, and thus leaves us with more freedom to attend to the ideas conveyed by the words, and so heightens the reader's pleasure. Note the illustration of this truth in the following contrasted sentences, quoted in Mr. Spencer's essay. In the first we have only the abstract terms; in the second sentence these are translated, with a marked gain in vividness, into their concrete correlatives:—

- (a) "In proportion as the manners, customs, and amusements of a nation are cruel and barbarous, the regulations of their penal code will be severe."
- (b) "In proportion as men delight in battles, bull-fights, and combats of gladiators, will they punish by hanging, burning, and the rack."

The superiority of the concrete expressions in the second sentence is manifest. The value of the figure of speech known as *Synecdoche*, in which the part is put for the whole, is due to the same gain in vivid mental-picturing. Thus "a fleet of ten *sail*," is more vivid than "a fleet of ten ships". Again, to say, "The kettle is boiling," is to convey the idea much more rapidly than by the phrase "The water in the kettle is boiling". To say, "Beware of drinking!" is, as Mr. Spencer points out, less effective than to say, "Beware

of the *bottle* ! " and is so, clearly, because it calls up a less specific image.

The moral of all this is, that too much care cannot be expended on the acquisition of a full vocabulary, in order that one's language may be as clear, direct and cogent as possible. A wordy, or a confused or a loose style offends against the principle of economising the reader's attention. Hence the importance of an accurate choice of words, of propriety in their use, and of a nice discrimination of synonyms, i.e. of words cognate in meaning and associated in use but often differentiated by those subtle shades of distinction which lend colour to style. The English language, it need hardly be said, offers an exceedingly wide field in which to choose and distinguish words. English has, in fact, a very much larger stock of words than any other language that ever existed in the world. Moreover, owing to the peculiar history of its growth, which has resulted in placing at the disposal of the student—at least, in the great majority of instances—a Romance and a Latin word for every Saxon one, correct word-choosing in English is of special importance. Such sets of words as the following will illustrate this point:—

<i>Saxon.</i>	<i>Romance.</i>	<i>Latin.</i>
anger	fury	choler
ire	rage	indignation
wrath		passion
ask	inquire	interrogate
bait	{ lure } { decoy }	temptation
bewail	lament	deplore
boldness	courage	fortitude
brink	verge	margin
care	anxiety	solicitude

**Use of Saxon Words.**—And here it may at once be said that any such hard-and-fast rule as "Use only Saxon words" is not to be unreservedly commended. Partly on account of their usually monosyllabic char-

acter, and partly because they form the greater portion of our early language, and are thus connected with our most vivid associations, Saxon words have, as a rule, an advantage in directness of presentation over the foreign words in the language. But to use them indiscriminately and persistently on every occasion would be to offend against the law of variety, in addition to neglecting all the wealth which the English language has acquired from non-native sources. This being so, the student may be commended to draw up for himself extended lists on the plan of that just given. While extending his vocabulary, this exercise will cultivate a sense of discrimination between words related in meaning, which cannot fail to be of great profit. The study of the History of the English Language and of Philology is also of immense advantage in the acquisition of a thorough mastery of style and idiom. The student who investigates them in the proper way will find them full of a fascination of their own.

It is now time to turn from these general considerations to say a few words in detail on (a) The choice of words; (b) Propriety in the use of words; and (c) Figures of speech.

#### (a) CHOICE OF WORDS.

To cultivate a close acquaintance and familiarity with the masters of English style is the best means of acquiring a true sense of the different values of words. No set rules can take the place of this discipline. It should be pursued with the critical faculties on the alert for nice shades of meaning, subtle effects of emphasis, and fine touches of artistic effect. For this purpose it is best to re-read a work with which one is somewhat familiar, so that the necessary attention to style shall not be distracted by interest in the development of the argument or plot.

Another excellent method of increasing one's vocabulary is translation from a foreign language. This, if it is not a mere mechanical replacing of one dictionary word

by another, but a sincere and conscious effort to render the idiom of one tongue into that of another, is an exercise of great value. The study of the English poets—and even the learning by heart of passages of poetry—is also a practice to be commended as conducing to the enrichment of one's stock of words. In prose, however, we should not adopt a poetical cast of style—a fault but too common with young and inexperienced writers—but, inasmuch as poetical language is, at its best, the language of impassioned, and consequently natural, feeling, the preponderance of the Saxon element in the best English poetry is very marked. When poetic diction in prose writing is deprecated, it is the tawdry, rhetorical, affected element in some poetry that is meant to be censured. But the reading of authors like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, Wordsworth, and Tennyson, cannot be too highly recommended as an exercise in the noble use of language.

**Our Words should State our Thoughts Exactly.**—Do not overstate or understate your meaning by using words that are too weak or too strong for the idea you intend to convey. If you mean simply a *house*, do not speak of a *mansion*. Discriminate nicely between words of this kind, which you will often see set down in dictionaries as synonyms. Thus, words such as *anger*, *rage*, *fury*; *ruin*, *impair*, *imperil*; *annoyed*, *saddened*, *shocked*; *like*, *love*, *adore*, express various shades of meaning and cannot be replaced one by another indiscriminately. Useful exercises might be set in the use of “synonyms” of this nature in order to train the sense of appreciation of fine degrees of emphasis.

The following sentence, quoted in Genung's “*Outlines of Rhetoric*,” and originally taken from a newspaper, is a good example of misused words: “The hills on *either* side of the river were literally crowded with people who could *witness* from this high point all that was *transpiring* on the battle-field, and be out of range of the deadly bullets”. Now the word *either* means one of two, but obviously *each* or *both* was meant by the writer. To *witness* is to bear testimony, whereas the

writer only meant that the people could see. The word *transpire* is improperly used for *occur* or *take place*. Its proper meaning is that something escaped from secrecy and became publicly known. Thus we may write: "What happened never definitely transpired".

The following somewhat humorous instance of the misuse of a verb is also taken from a newspaper paragraph: "Constable X., who had hitherto borne an excellent character amongst his fellow members of the force, this morning so far *forgot himself* as to shoot his superior officer".

**Avoid Ambiguity.**—Be careful that no ambiguity lurks in your words. Thus, "She listened with interest to the conversation going on *about* her," may mean *around* her, or *concerning* her. There was ambiguity also in the reply of a distinguished statesman to a pushing author who had, unasked, forwarded his latest work to the great man. "Dear Sir"—so ran the reply—"your work has come to hand, and I shall lose no time in reading it."

**Simple Words to be Preferred.**—In general it is well to use the simplest words that the subject will admit of. There are, of course, subjects which have a terminology of their own, and cannot be fittingly rendered in popular language, but no theme that the young student is likely to be concerned with involves the use of pompous, erudite, or exaggerated language. Such masters of the language as Addison and Goldsmith carefully avoid the use of high-sounding or stilted diction. Their language, as a rule, is homely to a degree, but as exact as it is simple. No better models could be set before the student in search of a plain, clear style.

#### (b) PROPRIETY IN THE USE OF WORDS.

With regard to propriety in the use of words, the student may be advised to avoid all slang terms, provincialisms, and words recently introduced into the language. Such expressions as "*awfully nice*," "he is the best player *by long chalks*," "you must feel *sat on*," should never appear in a serious essay. The use of

new words, which are often of distinct value in themselves, such as *boycott* and *buncombe*, is not to be so unreservedly forbidden, but the young writer, at any rate, will do well to err on the side of caution. Pope's well-known lines ought to be kept in mind :—

"In words, as fashions, the same rule will hold ;  
Alike fantastic, if too new or old :  
Be not the first by whom the new are tried,  
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

**Foreign Words.**—It may be repeated here that foreign words should be used most sparingly. If used, care should be taken to use them properly. Many of the very commonest French words are constantly misused by English writers. Thus we find *morale*, *locale*, *chaperone*, whereas a Frenchman would never use the final *e* in any of these words. We read of a combat *à l'outrance*, where of course *à outrance* is the correct phrase. *Exposé* is another word which is either wrongly used or superfluous. It cannot mean "exposure," and whenever it means "exposition," the latter is the word to use. Again, it is an offence against good style to translate literally a foreign idiom. The common expression, "it goes without saying," which is meant to be a translation of the French, "*cela va sans dire*," is very inelegant, and moreover needless. "It is obvious," "it is generally acknowledged," "it is unnecessary to say," are good English, and express the required idea clearly.

**Misused Words.**—A contributor to a discussion on "misused words," which was carried on in the *Times* a few years ago, brought forward the following examples of improperly used English words :—

"'Mutual' is still often employed as a synonym for 'common' (as in 'Our Mutual Friend'), instead of as a synonym for 'inter-changed' or 'reciprocal'. 'Demean' is still often employed instead of 'debase,' whereas it is almost equivalent to 'behave,' and certainly conveys no unfavourable suggestion. Curiously enough, 'demeanour' is never substituted for 'debasement'. Again, 'partake of,' which obviously means 'take a part of,' is almost invariably used instead of 'take the whole of'.

Let me also mention 'preposterous'. It does not, as is usually accepted, mean 'unfair' or 'ridiculous'. It means simply 'hindmost first,' or, idiomatically, 'topsy-turvy'. How often, again, do we not meet with such contradictory expressions as 'bad caligraphy' or 'vile orthography,' in spite of the fact that all caligraphy must be beautiful, and all orthography correct? 'Alternative' means 'a choice of two,' yet we often find the word employed as if it implied 'choice of any number'; and, similarly, we occasionally encounter three or more horns of a dilemma."

The usage of the best writers is really the only safe criterion in case of doubt. Etymology often supplies a clue to the proper signification of a word, but to follow it slavishly would be absurd. The remarks of the late Archbishop Trench on this matter, in his lectures on "*The Study of Words*," deserve to be quoted here:—

"It has before now," he writes, "become a veritable case of conscience with some whether they ought to use words which originally rested on, and so seem still to affirm, some superstition or untruth. This question has practically settled itself; the words will keep their ground; but further, they have a right to do this; for no word need be considered so to root itself in its etymology, and to draw its sap and strength from thence, that it cannot detach itself from this, and acquire the rights of an independent existence. And thus our weekly newspapers commit no absurdity in calling themselves 'journals' or 'diurnals'; and we as little when we name that a 'journey' which occupies, not one, but several days. We involve ourselves in no real contradiction, speaking of a 'quarantine' of five, ten, or any number of days more or fewer than forty; or of a population 'decimated' by a plague, though exactly a tenth of it has not perished. We are said to 'prune' (Provinger) other trees besides vines. A stone coffin may be still a 'sarcophagus' without thereby implying that it has any special property of consuming the flesh of bodies which are laid within it. In like manner the wax of our

'candles' ('candela,' from 'candeo') is not necessarily white; our 'rubrics' retain their name, though seldom printed in red ink; neither need our 'miniatures' quit theirs, though they are no longer painted with 'minium' or carmine; our 'surplice' is not usually worn over an undergarment of skins; our 'stirrups' are not ropes by aid of which we climb upon our horses; nor are 'haver-sacks' sacks for the carrying of oats; it is not barley or bere only which we store up in our 'barns,' nor hog's fat in our 'larders'; there are 'palaces' which are not built on the Palatine hill; and 'nausea' which is not sea-sickness."

We may say, in general, that in all cases of doubt or dispute, the right course is to give established usage the preference, to avoid novelties as such; but at the same time to recognise that language is no mere fossil, but an organic and still living growth. To avoid mere archaism on the one hand, and mere slang on the other, is a golden rule.

#### (c) FIGURES OF SPEECH.

Variety in the wording of a composition will much depend upon the writer's command of synonyms and figurative language. Enough has, perhaps, been said of the choice of words in the preceding sections. Figurative language, or words employed, not in their literal signification, but applied to objects resembling, or otherwise connected in our minds with, the things they literally signify, enriches and beautifies style. It is further a distinct help to lucidity, as, by means of it, the reader's imagination is supplied with images which exhibit the thing in its relations of likeness, contrast, etc., to other things. Apart from this help to clearness and distinctness, the images thus presented are in themselves a source of pleasure to the mind. At the same time, the young writer should not overload his essay with figures of speech, which properly belong to the sphere of poetry or impassioned prose.

The chief figures with which the student ought to be familiar are given below. If a fuller acquaintance with

figurative language is required, some standard work on rhetoric should be consulted.

**Simile and Metaphor.**—The two figures of speech most commonly employed are *similes* and *metaphors*.

A **Simile** is an expressly-stated comparison, generally, though not invariably, introduced by some such word as: *as, so, like*. **Example:** "He was meek as a lamb and yet, on occasion, bold as a lion." "His wrath was as the storm."

An effective use of simile is a great aid to lucidity and vivacity of style. The following passage, from Washington Irving's description of Hell-gate Strait, in the "*Tales of the Traveller*," is a good instance of the effective, if somewhat daring, use of this figure:—

"At low water it (the strait) is as pacific a stream as you may wish to see; but as the tide rises it begins to fret; at half-tide it roars with might and main, *like a bully* bellowing for more drink; but when the tide is full it relapses into quiet, and for a time sleeps as soundly as an alderman after dinner. In fact, it may be compared to a quarrelsome toper, who is a peaceable fellow enough when he has no liquor at all, or when he has a skinful, but who, when half seas over, plays the very devil."

A **Metaphor** also implies comparison. The comparison is not, however, made in express terms, but names and attributes belonging to an object are transferred to another, which it is assumed to resemble. **Example:** "That man is a lion," meaning he has the strength or courage of a lion. "The *smiling* meadow"—the idea of cheerful expression being transferred from the human countenance to the field with the sun glinting on it. An immense proportion of our words and phrases contain metaphors: e.g., "a hard heart," "the Key of Heaven," "a storm of passion," "swollen with pride," "the breath of life," "tension of mind," and so forth. As Carlyle says, in his own emphatic way, speaking of Imagination: "Metaphors are her stuff: examine language; what, if you except some few primitive elements (of natural sound), what is it all but metaphors, recognised

as such, or no longer recognised; still fluid and florid, or now solid-grown and colourless”.

**NOTE.**—An easy way of testing the justness of a metaphor is to put it explicitly as a simile. If the simile is congruous, *i.e.* true, the metaphor is allowable. This test applied to such a metaphor as the following at once exhibits its absurdity: “The pale face of the English soldier is the backbone of our army in India”. The comparison here implied is: “As the backbone is to the human body so is the pale face of the English soldier to our army in India”.

**Mixed Metaphors.**—The student should, in using this figure, be aware of the danger of mixed metaphor. We must follow out the figurative word or phrase we employ, and not shift to another and incongruous image till we have concluded our statement with the first. Want of caution in this respect leads to the most ludicrous effects. Thus—“Peace has poured oil on the troubled waters, and they blossom like the rose,” is an extreme example of an error that, in a less glaring form, is not uncommon.

**Metonymy and Synecdoche.**—The figures of *Metonymy* (taking the accompanying or distinguishing quality of a thing for the thing itself) and *Synecdoche* (taking the part for the whole) may be treated together as being cognate in principle. Examples of the former are: “The bright death quivered at the victim’s throat,” or “The fortress was weakness itself”; and of the latter, “A hundred hands were busy then,” or the instance already given, “A fleet of ten sail”. The advantage of these figures is, that they make a more direct appeal to the imagination by the use of a more concrete and specific term.

**Hyperbole.**—The figure of *Hyperbole* consists in consciously overstating some quality or characteristic of an object with a view to its more vivid realisation. The following humorous example is quoted in Genung’s “*Rhetoric*”: “His portly form displays an acre of glossy shirt-front, with a diamond as large as a goose egg”. Exaggerations of this kind are of course not meant to deceive any one, but to give life to a description.

**Irony** is the use of words or phrases in such a way as to indicate that the contrary of their literal meaning is intended. Thus Antony, speaking of Cæsar's murderers, says: "So are they all, all *honourable* men".

**Personification** consists in using words so as to attribute personal character to inanimate things. Thus Grattan, speaking of Ireland's liberty, says: "I watched by *her* cradle. I have followed *her* hearse."

NOTE.—Observe the resemblance as well as the distinction between Metaphor, Irony, Metonymy.

The devices here dealt with as Figures of Speech, consist in some deviation from the ordinary application of *words*. There is another class of such devices which consists in a deviation from the ordinary construction of the *sentence*. Of these the most important are:—

**Antithesis.**—*Antithesis* is the employment of two contrasted statements, with a view to aiding the comprehension of both. When one idea is contrasted with another, both are brought out into greater prominence. **Example:** "I thought this man had been a lord among wits, but I find he is only a wit among lords." "To err is human, to forgive divine." "A timorous foe and a suspicious friend."

**Epigram.**—An *epigram* may be described as a brief, pithy antithesis, with something of a paradoxical element in it. Thus: "Language was given us to conceal our thoughts." "The best way to get pleasure is to forget it." "The child is father of the man."

**Rhetorical Question.**—Instead of making a statement the writer conveys his meaning by asking a question: *e.g.*, "How long wilt thou abuse our patience, Cataline?" "If such things be done in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"

**Apostrophe** consists in addressing a statement to an object instead of making an equivalent statement about it, *e.g.*, Madame Roland's exclamation when, on her way to the guillotine, she was led past the statue of Liberty: "O Liberty, how many crimes are committed in thy name!"

These are the chief figures which are of importance for the beginner in English composition. One and all should be used sparingly; but, if properly employed, they unquestionably tend to brighten and strengthen an essay.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SENTENCE.

A SENTENCE is a combination of words making a complete statement. Every sentence has two essential parts—the *Subject*, or the name of the thing or person spoken about, and the *Predicate*, or what is said about the subject. Reduced to its simplest form the sentence consists of a substantive (noun or pronoun) and a verb: e.g., "Fire burns". But this form of sentence is comparatively rare, and we usually have to do with sentences in which either the subject, or predicate, or both are modified. This modification, when it affects the subject, is usually spoken of in grammars as the "enlargement of the subject". Thus, in the sentence, "*Good and studious boys wishing to do their duty*, work well," the italicized words are generally spoken of as the enlargement of the subject "boys". Again, the modification of the predicate is described as the "extension of the predicate". Thus, in the sentence, "Boys work *well to please their master*," the italicized words would be called the extension of the predicate. Moreover, when the predicate verb has, as it usually has, an object, that object when modified is said to be "enlarged". Thus, in the sentence, "Boys study well *their difficult home* lessons," the words in italics are called the enlargement of the object. Students accustomed to parsing and the analysis of sentences will be familiar with these terms, and it is probably best to retain them. It may be pointed out, however, that, except in the too obvious sense of an increase in the number of words, to speak of the *enlargement* of the subject or the *extension* of the predicate is, as often as not, to employ misleading terms. For instance, in the example

already cited, "Good and studious boys wishing to do their duty, work well," the subject "boys" is in reality not enlarged by the modifying words, but restricted. That is to say, the term "boys" is of wider application than the term "good and studious boys," etc. It is well to bear this in mind, if we retain the phraseology of our grammars.

The elements of a sentence then are: (1) *a principal element*, either subject or predicate; (2) *a modifier*, either of the subject, predicate, or object; (3) *a connective*. The first step in the analysis of sentences is to determine exactly the subject and predicate. The next is to find the modifying words, and affix them to the word or words which they really modify. This, we have already said, is a most useful exercise, and, when intelligently performed, of great aid to the student in showing him the plan on which sentences, paragraphs, and indeed whole compositions are built up. When it is, as it should be, supplemented by the practice of combining sentences by a process of synthesis, its utility will be greatly increased. Examples of this latter process will be readily found, but a specimen may be appended:—

*Simple Sentences.*

The boy was small. He ran away from school. He lost his way. A dog attacked him. In crossing a stream he was drowned.

*Compound Sentence.*

The small boy who ran away from school lost his way, was attacked by a dog, and in crossing a stream was drowned.

**Logical Analysis of Sentences.**—In this connection, the *logical* analysis of sentences, as opposed to what may be called their literary analysis, may, where the students are fit to grasp it, be unreservedly recommended. Thus, for an example:—

*Sentence.*

"An impression once created is with difficulty removed."

The ordinary analysis of this sentence is this :—

<i>Subject</i>	.	.	An impression <i>once created</i>
<i>Predicate</i>	.	.	<i>is with difficulty</i> removed.

In a full analysis the words in italics would be called the "enlargements" of the subject and predicate respectively. This analysis is, however, almost entirely mechanical, and does not help the student much, so far as insight into the *force* and *exact predication* of the sentence is concerned. Now, in the sentence quoted, the adverbial phrase "with difficulty" is the emphatic centre of predication, a fact that is obscured rather than made clear by the analysis already made. It is, however, clearly brought out by the logical treatment of the sentence, as follows :—

<i>Subject.</i>	<i>Copula.</i>	<i>Predicate.</i>
The removal of an im-	is	a matter of difficulty.
pression once created		

Every literary sentence can be reduced to a skeleton logical form of this kind ; and by so treating sentences, the student not merely discovers what is really meant to be predicated of the subject, but discovers the manner in which literary effects are produced by the reversal, or modification, of the strict logical order. In the case of such a sentence as, "A love of poetry is a characteristic of the Celtic race," a little reflection shows that the grammatical subject of the sentence is logically not its true subject at all. Nothing is really predicated of the grammatical subject, "a love of poetry". The real force of the sentence is, "The *Celtic race* have such a love of poetry that it forms a characteristic feature of their national character". This practice of searching for the true predicate is of a most educating kind. As has been said, it shows one the inner structure of the sentence, which is often veiled by the devices of literary and rhetorical art. The speeches of Burke and the essays of Macaulay will, it may be added, supply abundant material for this exercise, as indeed for most others in the art of composition.

In forming our own sentences we should be careful to give prominence to the true subject of predication. Grammatically it will hold the most important place if it is subject to the principal verb. Taking the order of words into account, we give it the most important place when we place it immediately at the beginning of the sentence, where it first arrests the attention; or when, for the sake of special emphasis, we invert the usual order, and place it at the end, where it may make an impression which shall continue in the mind after the sentence has been completed.

Thus, if we wish to say that the French were defeated in the war with Germany, and had to pay a heavy war indemnity, and give up a portion of their territory, let us not write: "The war ended in the defeat of the French, who were forced to pay a large war indemnity, and surrender a portion of their territory". What we wish to state is: "The French were defeated in the war, and had to pay the penalty of defeat in a large war indemnity to Germany, and the cession of a considerable portion of their territory". As we wish to make a statement about the French, let us begin with them at once without introducing other things to engage the reader's attention.

The method of giving prominence to the subject of our statement by placing it at the end of the sentence is exemplified by the following: "Yet another quality in which Macaulay gains by comparison with the strongest men is the art of historical perspective".

**Various kinds of Sentences.**—The different kinds of sentences, from a *grammatical* point of view—the Simple, the Complex and the Compound—have already been defined, and no doubt are sufficiently known to the student. Something remains to be said of the *rhetorical* aspect and value of sentences. From this latter standpoint, sentences are usually divided into *short, long, periodic, loose, balanced*. The division, inasmuch as it is a cross-division, is faulty, yet it may be admitted on the grounds of convenience of reference. As in the case of words, there is no rigid rule for the exclusive

use of any one form of sentence. Variety requires that the different kinds should be judiciously interspersed, and the practice of the best writers will be found in accord with this requirement.

**Short Sentences.**—The tendency of modern English is, speaking generally, in favour of short sentences, and against the Latinism of such writers as Hooker and Clarendon; but the student may safely be recommended to avail himself, on occasion, of every form of sentence that has the sanction of good usage. Each class of sentence, indeed, has a special function and force which should be attended to. Thus, to give point to an assertion, or vivacity and crispness to a description, the short sentence should be employed. The following passages from Burke offer good illustrations of the vividness secured by short crisp sentences:—

“In large bodies, the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the extremities. Nature has said it. The Turk cannot govern Egypt and Arabia and Kurdistan as he governs Thrace; nor has he the same dominion in Crimea and Algiers which he has at Brusa and Smyrna. Despotism itself is obliged to truck and huckster. The Sultan gets such obedience as he can. He governs with a loose rein that he may govern at all; and the whole force of his authority in his centre is derived from a prudent relaxation in all his borders. Spain, in her provinces is, perhaps, not so well obeyed as you are in yours. She complies too; she submits; she watches times. This is the immutable condition, the eternal law, of extensive and detached empire.”

“America had the compensation of your capital, which made her bear her servitude. She had another compensation, which you are now going to take away from her. She had, except the commercial restraint, every characteristic mark of a free people in all her internal concerns. She had the image of the British constitution. She had the substance. She was taxed by her own representatives. She chose most of her own magistrates. She paid them all. She had in effect the sole disposal of her own internal Government.”

The frequent ellipsis of the verb, and the suppression of the co-ordinating conjunction in compound sentences, also produce, when skilfully used, a marked effect of vivid narrative. Of the former, the following is a somewhat extreme instance from Dickens' "*A Christmas Carol*":—

"Sitting-room, bed-room, lumber-room: all as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fireguard, old shoes, two fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker."

The suppression of the co-ordinating conjunction—a figure of speech sometimes dignified with the Greek name of *Asyndeton*—is well illustrated in a beautiful passage already quoted in part:—

"Life passes, riches fly away, popularity is fickle, the senses decay, the world changes, friends die. One alone is constant; One alone is true to us; One alone can be true; One alone can be all things to us; One alone can supply our needs; One alone can train us up to our full perfection; One alone can give a meaning to our complex and intricate nature; One alone can give us time and harmony; One alone can form and possess us."

**Long Sentence.**—When we want to get an effect of rhythm, or when we want to modify our assertion in much detail, it is obvious that a long sentence will best serve our purpose. The following sentences, in which the student will notice the effects of rhythm and cadence, is from a famous passage on Music in Newman's "*Sermons before the University*":—

"Can it be that these mysterious stirrings of heart and keen emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what and awful impressions from we know not where, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstan-

tial, and comes and goes, and begins and ends in itself? It is not so; it cannot be. No; they have escaped from some higher sphere; they are the outpourings of eternal harmony in the medium of created sound; they are echoes from our home; they are the voice of angels, or the *Magnificat* of saints, or the living laws of divine governance, or the divine attributes; something they are besides themselves, which we cannot compass—which we cannot utter—though mortal man, and he perhaps not otherwise distinguished above his fellows, has the gift of eliciting them."

**Periodic Sentence.**—A *periodic* sentence is one in which the sense is kept incomplete until the end is reached. It is rather a Latin than an English construction, but its occasional use helps to maintain attention and interest. We can suspend the meaning of a sentence in many ways. By the use of words like "if," "when," or of correlative phrases such as "on the one hand—on the other," "not only—but also," "though—yet," and so forth. A suspensive effect is also attained by placing the predicate and descriptive matter before the subject, e.g., "The most versatile and myriad-minded man of his age, and one of the greatest geniuses of all times, was *William Shakespeare*". Once more, instead of simply writing, "His grief was greater than his anger," we gain a certain effect by making it a periodic sentence: thus, "Great as was his anger, his grief was still greater". On the whole, however, it is well to use this form of sentence sparingly; for, unless skilfully handled, it is apt to read pedantic and stilted.

**Loose Sentence.**—The *loose* sentence is opposed to that just treated. In it we might stop at one or several points before the actual full stop is reached, and yet have a sentence that would be complete in itself. Thus, the loose sentences:—

"Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was | and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer in the county | till a cruel disease called a cancer came | and bowed her down with pain | but it could never bend her good

spirits | or make them stoop | but they were still upright  
| because she was so good and religious”;

“Shakespeare was now at the height of his fame |  
the author of the greatest dramas the world knows |  
thoroughly familiar with human nature | and its secret  
workings | looked up to by the greatest of his contem-  
poraries | who saw his popularity without a pang of  
jealousy | and seemed almost anxious to emphasise his  
glory.”

might have stopped at any of the points indicated by the  
bars.

This kind of sentence, though it is to be found in the  
best writers, is not to be recommended to the young  
writer. In his hands it is too apt to degenerate into  
a heterogeneous jumble of simple sentences, and thus  
offend against the primary law of every sentence,  
*viz.*, unity of thought.

**Balanced Sentence.**—The *balanced* sentence secures its  
effect by antithesis, and, on occasion, it is most effective.  
Thus in the sentences: “The Romans consider religion  
a part of virtue; the Jews virtue a part of religion”;

“He raised a mortal to the skies;  
She drew an angel down”;

*balance* has almost an epigrammatic effect.

The student, in his preparatory essays, should practise  
the use of each kind of the above sentences; and in his  
reading should note any good example of the several  
kinds he meets with. To read an essay of Goldsmith,  
or Addison, or Lamb with this view, and to mark on the  
margin the different kinds of sentences would be an ex-  
cellent practice. A happy admixture of all the species  
of sentences will be found to produce the best results in  
imparting variety and interest to the composition.

**Unity of Thought.**—In framing sentences the impor-  
tant thing is never to forget that unity of thought is the  
distinctive characteristic of the sentence-form. Make  
your sentence embody one main idea. Qualify that idea  
as much as you wish, but let the final impression be  
single. Mere length, remember, does not destroy the

unity of the sentence. A compound sentence may convey quite as single an impression as the briefest of simple sentences. If it does not, it is faulty as a sentence. Thus in the well-known example: "Archbishop Tillotson died in this year. He was exceedingly beloved both by King William and Queen Mary, *who nominated Dr. Tennison, Bishop of Lincoln, to succeed him,*" the italicized portion of the second sentence introduces a completely distinct idea which should have a sentence to itself. Of course, clauses may, with propriety, be introduced into composite sentences which serve to illustrate or exemplify the main idea. For instance, Macaulay, in one of his speeches, has this sentence:—

"Even in our mirth, however, there is sadness; for it is no light thing that he who represents the British nation in India should be a jest to the people of India." Here the second clause is an explanation of the first. Burke, in his speech on "Conciliation with America," has the following admirable sentence constructed on a similar principle: "Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together". Newman often gains beautiful effects by a sentence packed with illustrations of the chief idea. The following is a noteworthy example on many grounds:—

"As, when a man is given over, he may die at any moment, yet lingers; as an implement of war may at any moment explode, and must at some time; as we listen for a clock to strike, and at length it surprises us; as a crumbling arch hangs, we know not how, yet it is not safe to pass under: *so creeps on this feeble, weary world; and one day, before we know where we are, it will end.*"

A sentence may also, without violence to its unity, contain an *assertion and its consequence*. Thus Matthew Arnold writes:—

"Genius is mainly an affair of energy, and poetry is mainly an affair of genius; *therefore* a nation whose spirit is characterised by energy may be eminent in poetry; and we have Shakespeare."

Or an *assertion and its contrast*, for example:—

"The capacity of indignation makes an essential part of the outfit of every honest man; but I am inclined to doubt whether he is a wise one who allows himself to act upon its first hints."

In narrative it is permissible, and indeed generally advisable, to join in one sentence events closely connected in a time-series or descriptive of a single effect of nature or of a definite object. The following examples are offered:—

"The evening was calm and still, but dark for the season, for it was now near midsummer; and every object had disappeared in the gloom, save the outlines of a ridge of low hills that rose beyond the moor; but I could determine where the chapel and the churchyard lay; and great was my astonishment to see a light flickering amid the gravestones and the ruins."

(Here the contrast of the gloom and the flickering light may be taken as the unifying element in this somewhat heterogeneous sentence.)

"Old Wardle led the way to a pretty large sheet of ice; and the fat boy and Mr. Weller having shovelled and swept away the snow which had fallen on it during the night, Mr. Bob Sawyer adjusted his skates with a dexterity which, to Mr. Winkle, was perfectly marvellous, and described circles with his left leg and cut figures of eight; and inscribed upon the ice, without once stopping for breath, a great many other pleasant and astonishing devices, to the excessive satisfaction of Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupman, and the ladies; which reached a pitch of positive enthusiasm when old Wardle and Benjamin Allen, assisted by the aforesaid Bob Sawyer, performed some mystic evolutions, which they called a reel."

(All these details it will be noticed make up the occurrences of one brief time, and indeed of one action.)

"It was vehemently urged that this mode of conveyance (the coach) would be fatal to the breed of horses and to the noble art of horsemanship; that the Thames, which had long been an important nursery of seamen, would cease to be the chief thoroughfare from London up to Windsor and down to Gravesend; that saddlers

and spurriers would be ruined by hundreds; that numerous inns, at which mounted travellers had been in the habit of stopping, would be deserted, and would no longer pay any rent; that the new carriages were too hot in summer and too cold in winter; that the passengers were grievously annoyed by invalids and crying children; that the coach sometimes reached the inn so late that it was impossible to get supper and sometimes started so early that it was impossible to get breakfast."

There is no rigid rule for sentences of this kind. Only wide reading of the best models, and sound judgment based thereon, will enable the student to decide when the elaboration of details, or contrasts, or successive stages of narration will be an offence against the necessary unity of all sentences. It is better to err on the side of short sentences than to confuse the reader by combining incongruous ideas in an artificial unity.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE PARAGRAPH.

"THE grouping of sentences into paragraphs is," says Professor Earle, "the true art of modern prose." We have lost the sonorous periods and involved sentences of Hooker, and Milton, and Clarendon, but we can gain much of the same massive effect of dignity by the artful structure and judicious use of the paragraph. As the sentence is the succinct expression of one leading idea, so the paragraph is the development of one topic or phase of a subject. Each has a unity of its own. The paragraph is no more an unordered jumble of sentences, than the sentence is the unnatural union of diverse ideas. We must remember that, as an adjective qualifies a noun, so, on a wider scale, one sentence can hold an adjectival relation to another. The student practised in the grammatical analysis of sentences will have no difficulty in understanding that relation. In this way the sentences in a paragraph are, as a rule, subordinated to one leading statement in which the theme of the paragraph is set forth. They modify, or illustrate, or expand it, but they should not, in a well-constructed paragraph, altogether lose touch with it. We ought always in fact to be able to state the gist of a paragraph in one brief pregnant sentence. This is a good enough test of the unity of our paragraphs.

**Length of the Paragraph.**—With regard to the length of the paragraph, it is not possible to lay down any precise rules. It may, like the sentence, vary within very wide-apart limits. A single sentence or a score of sentences may equally go to the making of a good paragraph.

Macaulay is the best author to study for the mechanical structure of the paragraph. His use of it is almost invariably masterly, and much of the lucidity and graphic power of his writings comes from his skilful employment of it on all occasions. The student, then, cannot but profit by an analysis, from the point of view of their paragraph-structure, of such essays as those on "Warren Hastings" and "Clive". The subject of each paragraph ought to be written out in a short sentence, and the manner of its expansion noted carefully.

Macaulay's essays are easily attainable in school editions. A few examples from other sources, showing how the paragraph is built up are given here.

#### EXPERIENCE OF LIFE NECESSARY TO THE TRUE UNDERSTANDING OF THE CLASSICS.

"Let us consider how differently old and young are affected by the words of some classic author, such as Homer or Horace. Passages, which to a boy are but rhetorical commonplaces, neither better nor worse than a hundred others which any clever writer might supply, which he gets by heart and thinks very fine, and imitates, as he thinks, successfully, in his own flowing versification, at length come home to him when long years have passed, and he has had experience of life, and pierce him, as if he had never before known them, with their sad earnestness and vivid exactness. Then he comes to understand how it is that lines, the birth of some chance morning or evening at an Ionian festival, or among the Sabine hills, have lasted generation after generation, for thousands of years with a power over the mind, and a charm which the current literature of his own day, with all its obvious advantages, is utterly unable to rival."

#### INDIFFERENCE OF THE WORLD.

"The world can pry out everything about us which it has a mind to know. But there is this consolation, which men will never accept in their own cases, that

the world does not care. Consider the amount of scandal it has been forced to hear in its time, and how weary and *blasé* it must be to that kind of intelligence. You are taken to prison, and fancy yourself indelibly disgraced? You are bankrupt under odd circumstances? You drive a queer bargain with your friends, and are found out, and imagine the world will punish you? Psha! Your shame is only vanity. Go and talk to the world as if nothing had happened, and nothing *has* happened. Tumble down; brush the mud off your clothes; appear with a smiling countenance, and nobody cares. Do you suppose society is going to take out its pocket-handkerchief and be inconsolable when you die? Why should it care very much, then, whether your worship graces yourself or disgraces yourself? Whatever happens, it talks, meets, jokes, yarns, has its dinner pretty much as before."

A GREAT MIND IS FORMED BY A FEW GREAT IDEAS,  
NOT BY AN INFINITY OF LOOSE DETAILS.

"What is needed to elevate the soul is, not that a man should know all that has been thought and written in regard to the spiritual nature—not that a man should become an encyclopædia; but that the great ideas in which all discoveries terminate, which sum up all sciences, which the philosopher extracts from the infinite details, may be comprehended and felt. It is not the quantity, but the quality of knowledge which determines the mind's dignity. A man of immense information may, through the want of large and comprehensive ideas, be far inferior in intellect to a labourer, who with little knowledge, has yet seized on great truths. For example, I do not expect the labourer to study theology in the ancient languages, in the writings of the Fathers, in the history of sects; nor is this needful. All theology, scattered as it is through countless volumes, is summed up in the idea of God; and let this idea shine right and clear in the labourer's soul, and he has the essence of theological libraries, and a far higher light than has visited thousands of renowned divines. A

great mind is formed by a few great ideas, not by an infinity of loose details."

The use of the paragraph in description is admirably illustrated by the following extract from *Adam Bede*. Note the skill with which the descriptive details in the first paragraph are all centred round the gate, and the naturalness of the transition to the description of the house itself in the second paragraph :—

"Evidently the gate is never opened: for the long grass and the great hemlocks grow close against it; and if it were opened, it is so rusty, that the force necessary to turn it on its hinges would be likely to pull down the square stone-built pillars, to the detriment of the two stone lionesses, which grin with a carnivorous affability above a coat-of-arms surmounting each of the pillars. It would be easy enough, by the aid of the nicks in the stone pillars, to climb over the brick wall with its smooth stone coping; but by putting our eyes close to the rusty bars of the gate, we can see the house well enough, and all but the very corners of the grassy enclosure.

"It is a very fine old place, of red brick, softened by a pale powdery lichen, which has dispersed itself with a happy irregularity, so as to bring the red brick into terms of friendly companionship with the limestone ornaments surrounding the three gables, the windows, and the door-place. But the windows are patched with wooden panes, and the door, I think, is like the gate—it is never opened; how it would groan and grate against the stone floor if it were! For it is a solid, heavy, handsome door, and must once have been in the habit of shutting with a sonorous bang behind a liveried lackey, who had just seen his master and mistress off the grounds in a carriage and pair."

The details in a well-formed paragraph should be connected with the central topic by some relation of thought, or time, or place. Each of these relations has been illustrated in the examples already given.

**Connecting Link between Paragraphs.**—It is of the first importance to link the paragraphs of our essay to-

gether, by some grammatical connecting word at least, if not by the subtler bond of thought-development. The unity of the essay requires this. Examples of grammatical connectives are such words as *but*, *yet*, *still*, *on the other hand*, or what may be called argumentative links, such as *accordingly*, *as a consequence*, *it follows*, *hence*, *therefore*. These words need not be obtruded at the opening of each paragraph, for such an arrangement would produce an unduly formal effect. They can be introduced after the opening words, or elsewhere, with better results. Thus the sentence, "However, the fullest expression of Johnson's feelings is undoubtedly to be found in *Rasselas*," might with advantage be written, "The fullest expression, however, of Johnson's feelings," etc. In Macaulay's essay on "Machiavelli," the following connectives are used in succeeding paragraphs. "It is *indeed* scarcely possible for any person," etc.; "It is not strange that ordinary readers should regard the author of *such a book* as the most depraved," etc.; "*One hypothesis* is that Machiavelli," etc.; "*After this*, it may seem ridiculous," etc.; "*This* is strange: and yet the strangest is behind". It is evident that there is no lack of variety in the possible manners of marking the transition from one paragraph to another. Different styles of writing require a different emphasis to be placed on the connecting links. In the development of a closely reasoned argument or the exposition of an involved subject, it is often necessary to use the most obvious finger-posts: *e.g.*, "in the first place," "secondly," "to come to my last point," etc.,—to mark the stages of the composition. On the other hand, in descriptive or narrative passages, the more subtly the connection is implied, the more the writing will be free from a categorical stiffness, which is not pleasing in such styles of writing. Here, again, the student will find the study of good models the best means of quickening his appreciation of the niceties and minor graces which lend distinction to style.

**Newspaper Paragraphs.**—In this matter of paragraph-structure—a subject the importance of which is

not to be measured by the necessary brevity of the present chapter—the study of the editorial writing in the newspapers (a study, so far at least as literary style is concerned, not usually to be prescribed) may be commended. The necessities of journalism force the leader-writer to become an adept at paragraph-writing, and the *structure* of his paragraphs is generally worthy of attention. It is this attention to form and arrangement, and the consequent lucidity attained, that made a well-known Professor of English say, “The focus of prose is now in the newspapers”.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE WHOLE COMPOSITION.

“TRUE ease in writing comes from art, not chance.”

So far we have been dealing with the elements of composition; with the materials which the student must have at hand when he sets to work to construct an essay on any given theme. The rules and restrictions that have been already laid down need not, indeed, be present *consciously* to his mind in the moment of composition. Any undue effort to keep them literally in view in the act of writing would have the effect of checking the flow of thought, and even of taking away from the naturalness of the writing. The accomplished violinist does not occupy himself with scales and exercises when he is interpreting the work of some master; all his powers are devoted to the artistic rendering of the theme. Scales and exercises are most necessary, even for the accomplished violinist, but they should be practised apart. In like manner, he who aspires to write with ease and beauty should have a ready command of the resources of diction, and of sentence and paragraph-structure, without the conscious effort of search. Hence the constant need of exercise in the preparatory stages of composition which have been dealt with in the preceding sections. Robert Louis Stevenson—an excellent model for the student of style—has told us that his readiness in the choice of happy words was not attained without a long and patient discipline. From boyhood it was his habit to carry about with him a note-book and pencil, and to seize every favourable opportunity of describing objects that surrounded him. Hence his wonderful facility and felicity

in description, and his great command of appropriate and picturesque language. If we are not constantly enriching our vocabulary by the study of the best authors we shall, at the moment of composition, find ourselves unable to call up the exact word for our impression and idea, and we shall grow into a slovenly habit of being satisfied with a word or phrase that but vaguely suggests our precise meaning. Loose writing of this kind is at the bottom of a vast number of controversies. The several parties to the argument, in a great number of cases, merely differ in the sense in which they understand the words employed, and have little or no fundamental opposition of ideas. The strict definition of terms is often the death of controversies.

**Constant Practice in Composition Necessary.**—The importance of constant exercise in the application of the principles laid down in the preceding pages can hardly be overstated. Essay-writing, however, must not be postponed till the principles of composition are thoroughly mastered. A famous politician once said that the best way to learn the rules of the House of Commons was by breaking them. The fact of being "called to order" impressed the rule of the House on the defaulter. Something analogous may be said for the practice of setting young students to write at once, even when their knowledge of the principles of correct writing is elementary. They will learn the art of good writing by being shown the faults of their own essays, more thoroughly and in a more personal manner than by any lists of defective sentences framed by the teacher or selected from the writings of others. Moreover, by the frequent exercise of essay-writing the young student will have experience of setting down his ideas in black and white, as the phrase goes, and will, as a result, gain a confidence that is of distinct value in counteracting the nervousness naturally associated with the examination room. With regard to the matter of the composition set to beginners, it is distinctly advisable to supply them with ideas. The teacher might with advantage read a short story and emphasise the points of it, making

sure that the pupils have grasped its significance by questioning them on its salient features. The narrative should then be set as the composition for the following day. This is a much more commendable plan than the common but absurd practice of setting boys and girls of ten to thirteen to discuss abstract propositions such as "Knowledge is Power," or "The Paths of Glory lead but to the Grave". Young students cannot be expected to have any well-defined ideas on these subjects. On this point, the remarks of Whately, in his *Rhetorio*, are excellent:—

"The subjects for composition to be selected on the principle I am recommending will," writes this authority, "generally fall under one of three classes: first, subjects drawn from the studies the learner is engaged in; relating, for instance, to the characters or incidents of any history he may be reading, and sometimes, perhaps, leading him to forestall by conjecture something which he will hereafter come to in the book itself; secondly, subjects drawn from any conversation he may be listening to (with interest) from his seniors, whether addressed to himself or between each other; or, thirdly, relating to the amusements, familiar occurrences, and every-day transactions which are likely to have formed the topics of easy conversation among his familiar friends. The student should not be confined exclusively to any one of these three classes of subjects; they should be intermingled in as much variety as possible; and the teacher should frequently recall to his own mind these two considerations; first, that since the benefit proposed does not consist in the intrinsic value of the composition, but in the *exercise* of the pupil's mind, it matters not how insignificant the subject may be, if it will but interest him, and hereby afford him such exercise; secondly, that the younger and backwarder each student is, the more unfit he will be for *abstract* speculations, and the less remote must be the subjects proposed from those *individual* objects and occurrences which always form the first beginning of the furniture of the youthful mind."

**How to Approach a Composition.**—When the average student finds himself in presence of a subject of composition, his ideas and impressions concerning it are usually of the vaguest. His mind is troubled with incoherent thoughts and random memories of what he has heard or read somewhere of the theme, and he is, too commonly, at a loss to know how to begin, and the sense that valuable time is slipping by tends to increase this mental confusion, which is, of course, fatal to the production of a well-ordered and carefully written composition. It is, therefore, of the very first importance for the student to have some plan for approaching a subject, and some method of arranging his thoughts, which will not fail him in his hour of need. In the succeeding chapter of this treatise, the different kinds of treatment demanded by the several species of subject-matter are considered in some detail. What is said here has reference to the general method of dealing with any subject whatever.

It is obvious then, that there are three stages in the preparatory work of essay-writing, *viz.*: (1) *The search for ideas on the given subject*; (2) *The formation of a plan*; (3) *The filling-in of the selected plan*.

**The Search for Ideas.**—The first thing to do when you find yourself called on to discuss a subject is to find out what you already think on it and know about it. This is not so easy a matter to discover as the novice might be inclined to imagine. The beginner is apt to think that he has a rush of ideas to the brain, and that all he needs is appropriate language in which to clothe them. This is not unusually the case; and it will generally be found that, when whatever ideas are present have been jotted down, fitting words will come quickly enough. How, then, discover these ideas? The best advice that can be given on this matter is to disabuse oneself at the start of all pre-occupation with a plan, or with any special view of the subject which one proposes to defend or refute. Do not, at first, seek even to penetrate, or reason about, the subject, but simply put your thoughts in motion, recall from the stores of memory anything and everything relevant to the pro-

posed theme, and stir up every association of similarity or contrast with which it is linked in your mind. The indecision and stiffness which mark most juvenile essays arise from the vain effort to combine two mental operations which, for the unpractised thinker, at any rate, are absolutely incompatible: namely, invention and reflection. The making of a plan and the choice of words are, for example, processes of reflection, and consequently any effort to keep them in view *at the actual time we are searching our minds for ideas on a given subject* is fatal for the inexperienced writer. It is some such vain effort that makes many students lose precious moments in the examination hall, biting their pen-handles or watching the clock, or surveying those of their companions who have already begun to write. Our counsel to such a one is, to abandon for the moment any idea of arrangement, any thought as to how he will begin, develop, or end his essay, and simply to jot down on a sheet of paper the first idea that comes into his head on the subject. This idea will usually not present itself in the form of a well-constructed sentence, but condensed probably into some salient word or phrase, and so it should be written. No time or effort should be wasted at this stage in trimming it into a complete sentence. The first idea will in most cases lead naturally to another, which in turn will suggest another, and so on. Anecdote, quotation, personal reminiscences—everything without regard to its ultimate suitability or not—should be made use of in this preparatory work of finding ideas. The important point is to encourage a free and spontaneous flow of thought.

Let us suppose—to illustrate briefly what has been said—the student finds himself called on to deal with the subject of “Is modern civilisation a failure?” In sifting his thoughts on the matter he finds uppermost, let us say, the notion that modern civilisation has a tendency towards refinement, and society has progressed. Instead of putting his thoughts at once into some such complete sentences as these: “Modern civilisation has an irresistible tendency to refine men”; “We have only to compare the state of society to-day with what it

used to be, and we cannot fail to see progress"; the student should jot down on his page for rough notes, some such phrases as "tending to refinement," "progress of society," which will serve to recall his points when he comes to revise his jottings with a view to a plan, and, at the same time, will not cause sufficient interruption to the flow of other ideas. Suppose, again, that the next image that occurs to his imagination as he considers the subject, is that modern civilisation has produced and fostered a cruel, calculating selfishness, and that it encourages artificiality of life, tyranny and misery. Then these few impressions would figure among his rough notes in some such way as follows: "tendency to refinement"; "progress of society"; "produced and fostered selfishness"; "encourages artificiality of life and misery". These phrases will, of course, look eccentric, and enigmatical to every one except the writer, but to him they stand for very vivid ideas, and will serve an admirable purpose when he comes to consider the order of his essay. Five, or even, ten minutes out of every hour devoted to the composition will not be too much to give to this matter which may be called *spontaneous preparation*.

**The Formation of a Plan.**—The student having jotted down in the way suggested as many ideas as rise in natural succession before his mind, should then turn to the work of evolving a plan from his group of hints. As has already been said, and as will be exemplified in the succeeding chapter, special rules of method are necessary for different kinds of composition. Thus, a descriptive essay and an argumentative one demand different plans. In general, however, it may be said, that every essay should be marked by unity of subject and unity of treatment. The composition should be written on a single theme. By unity of treatment we mean that the student should have some definite view of the subject, or when the composition is of the *argumentative* kind, some conviction on the merits of the proposed theme predominant in his essay. This will enable him to have greater order in his ideas, and to work to-

wards a climax, with the result that his work will gain in interest and strength. The following skeleton of a plan may be studied from this point of view:—

**Argumentative Subject.**—Is modern civilisation a failure?

#### GENERAL OUTLINE.

##### *Negative.*

1. Civilisation has an irresistible tendency to refine men, beginning with the upper classes, and spreading to the lower.
2. It increases the struggle for existence, and so calls forth the full faculties of an increasing number of men, to the benefit of the whole race.
3. We have only to compare the state of society to-day with what it used to be, and we cannot fail to see progress; the state of medicine proves this in regard to the body, of education in relation to the mind, and the state of public opinion in relation to morals.
4. As civilisation increases, fewer and fewer people live in idleness, with the result that the whole character of life is raised.
5. As long as men have faith and hope progress is possible.

##### *Affirmative.*

1. It has produced and fostered a cruel, calculating selfishness.
2. Civilisation is unchristian in its very essence, for it encourages artificiality of life, hypocrisy, inequality, tyranny and misery.
3. It saps the basis of morality and manliness by giving use to effeminacy, luxury and artificial vice.
4. The apparent improvement in society brought about by civilisation is merely an external matter, while the spirit of society is degenerating.

**Recapitulation and Summary.**—Summarise briefly and in antithetical form the arguments for and against modern civilisation, and emphasise by re-statement, if possible in altered form, the proposition which you set out to defend.

In essays of the type of the above, it is fatal to unity of thought not to balance the *pros* and *cons* of the subject in a final summing up, thus leaving the matter in a state of indecision or confusion. Still worse, of course, is it to maintain propositions which cannot stand together. The present writer once met with several examples of this absurdity in correcting a number of students' essays. The subject was "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy and wealthy and wise". To prove this excellent proverb, some students showed that if a person rose betimes in the morning he could—(1) take a long walk or bicycle ride in the fresh morning air, and return to breakfast with a splendid appetite, with the result that he secured health; (2) spend the morning hours in his office arranging his business plans carefully before the rush and excitement of the day's labours came on, and so amass wealth; and (3) turn to his books and studies while his brain was fresh, and thus treasure up wisdom for himself. It struck none of the youths who took these ingenious points that these arguments were mutually exclusive, and that the thesis was not that "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy *or* wealthy *or* wise," but healthy *and* wealthy *and* wise. The absence of precaution in this matter makes an essay lose half its effect because there is no true sequence of thought, and no sense of increasing interest leading to a climax.

In regard to the general plan of an essay, attention should further be given to the transition from one point to another. Something has already been said, in dealing with paragraphs, of the use of connectives. The transition, however, should not be merely a verbal one, but should represent a natural development of the main idea of the composition. There should, in fact, be continuity of thought, and not a series of paragraphs, whose only

connection is that they happen to be placed one after the other.

These points will be illustrated more in detail in the section on "Different Styles of Writing".

**The Filling-in of the Plan.**—The briefer and the simpler the plan is the better. A plan is required to place before the mind and the eye, in a small compass, the outline of the composition; if it is too detailed or elaborate it will be an impediment rather than an aid to the writer. In filling-in the plan, in putting flesh and blood on the skeleton, it is well to remember that, in your introduction, your main effort should be to state clearly and concisely the view you take of the proposed subject, and the limits within which you intend to discuss it. Thus Macaulay opens his history in the following words: "I purpose to write the history of England from the accession of King James II., down to a time which is within the memory of men still living," and devotes the opening paragraphs of his fine work to an even more detailed statement of its limits. This method makes for clearness, and, by giving the reader an idea at the outset of the direction in which he is going, secures at once his interest.

**Avoid Extraneous Topics.**—The student should be careful not to give undue prominence to *secondary* ideas, but to keep in view the prominent and interesting points of the subject of his composition. For example, anecdotes that do not help the argument or advance the narrative are, though interesting in themselves, better omitted. On the other hand, whenever possible, every important statement, especially abstract statements, should be appropriately illustrated.

**Concluding Paragraphs of the Essay.**—In conclusion, it may be urged on the student to concentrate the effect of his whole composition in its concluding paragraphs. The impression carried away by the reader as to the merits of a composition is naturally considerably influenced by the manner of its final appeal. Hence the importance in oratory of an impassioned appeal in the peroration; and, though the matter is not of so much

moment in the case of a written theme, it is by no means to be disregarded. As Professor Genung well says, in his "*Outlines of Rhetoric*": "If you are seeking to make your reader know some new fact or truth, your conclusion may *summarise* or *recapitulate*; if to make him feel or realise something, it may draw a striking *picture*; if to make him do or decide something, it may *appeal* to motive or character. Aim to leave the effect most consonant with your subject."

## CHAPTER VI.

### DIFFERENT STYLES OF WRITING.

IN most cases the subject of an essay suggests, at least in a general way, the plan to be employed. We do not tell a story (Narration) as we should state an argument (Argumentation), or explain a definite view of a subject (Exposition) as we should set about describing a landscape, a building, or a personality (Description). Of these four styles of writing, which practically include every possible species of composition, the argumentative and the expository are the most limited in the possible variety of treatment, though, even with them, a good deal of freedom and originality is possible. The varieties of the descriptive and narrative styles are exceedingly numerous; and, at first sight, might seem to be subject to no general laws, but to depend on the arbitrary whim or bent of the writer. This is not so, however; and it is possible, even in the case of description and narration, to lay down certain broad principles, the observance of which, without hampering originality or freshness of impression, is calculated to add clearness, charm, and vivacity to one's work. In this chapter it is proposed to consider briefly the chief of the principles alluded to under the four different heads of (a) Description, (b) Narration, (c) Exposition, (d) Argumentation.

#### (a) DESCRIPTION.

The aim of descriptive writing is to bring before the mind's eye of the reader some object, or scene, or person which the writer has himself seen. The power to convey to others in words a scene which we ourselves vividly

realise is very rare. The obscurity and vagueness of most descriptive writing come, paradoxical as it may seem, from an over-elaboration of detail and a neglect of bold outlines. Now, in presence of a landscape the eye rarely takes in detail. Its impression is formed of prominent features, such as a bold sweep of mountains, an expanse of water, a stretch of meadow-land, some conspicuous building. Again, the colour-scale is broad and vivid—blue sky and white clouds, and green fields, and grey-green water, and purple background. It is only the trained eye that takes in niceties of *form* and fine *shades* of colour; and, consequently, when in a description these refinements are dwelt on—no matter with what truth and beauty—it requires an effort to realise the effect in nature intended by the writer. It seems literary heresy to instance a passage from Ruskin as illustrating any flaw in descriptive writing; nevertheless we doubt if the student will gain a clear and vivid impression from the following elaborate word-picture, which dazzles by excess of detail. It is taken from the magnificent description of Schaffhausen:—

*The Fall of Schaffhausen.*

“Stand for half an hour beside the Fall of Schaffhausen, on the north side where the rapids are long, and watch how the vault of water first bends, unbroken in pure polished velocity, over the arching rocks at the brow of the cataract, covering them with a dome of crystal twenty feet thick, so swift that its motion is unseen except when a foam globe from above darts over it like a falling star, and how the trees are lighted above it under all their leaves at the instant that it breaks into foam; and how all the hollows of that foam burn with green fire, like so much shattering chrysopræse; and how, ever and anon, startling you with its white flash, a jet of spray leaps hissing out of the fall like a rocket, bursting in the wind and driven away in dust, filling the air with light, and how, thro’ the curdling wreaths of the restless crashing abyss below, the blue of the water

paled by the foam in its body, shows purer than the sky thro' white rain-cloud, while the shuddering iris stoops in tremulous stillness over all, fading and flushing alternately through the choking spray and shattered sunshine, hiding itself at last among the thick golden leaves, which toss to and fro in sympathy with the wild water; their dripping masses, lifted at intervals, like sheaves of loaded corn, by some stronger gusts from the cataract, and bowed again upon the mossy rocks as its roar dies away; the dew gushing from their thick branches thro' drooping clusters of emerald herbage, and sparkling in white threads along the dark rocks of the shore, feeding the lichens which chase and chequer them with purple and silver."

Splendid this as mere rhetoric! But, even on a second or third reading, has the student a *picture* of the famous cataract before him? If Ruskin, at his best, fails, how can the novice hope to make his reader realise a picture by over-elaboration of detail expressed in numberless adjectives? This is a fault to which young writers are prone. They will describe the rocks, flowers, and plants on a distant mountain with the same fullness of detail as they employ to depict the objects within a stone's throw. Now, of distant objects the eye takes in at most the colour and shape, and these often in a blurred manner. It is only the objects in the foreground of a scene that can be observed with any attention of detail of shape or definition of colour. And it must never be forgotten that the aim of a description of a landscape in an essay is not to construct a geological and botanical chart, but to convey to the reader in words a *picture* such as he would see were he actually in presence of the natural objects described. In a word, it is to the *imagination* of the reader that you appeal, and only indirectly to his reason. The student should remember the old saying, which is especially true in the present context, that "the half is often more than the whole". Thus, a portrait in oils of a friend whom we know well is, as a rule, far more vivid and lifelike than a photograph, though the latter is a far more literal and detailed

representation. To illustrate the graphic power and effectiveness which result from attending to broad outlines and prominent features, two masterly, if very different, examples are here given. The first is from a description of an Irish village and schoolhouse by Carleton, and the second is Byron's well-known picture of an Italian evening on the banks of the Brenta.

*An Irish Village.*

"The village of Milltown was situated at the foot of a long green hill, the outline of which formed a low arch, as it rose to the eye against the horizon. This hill was studded with clumps of beeches, and sometimes enclosed as a meadow. In the month of July, when the grass on it was long, many an hour have I spent in solitary enjoyment, watching the wavy motion produced upon its pliant surface by the sunny winds, or the flight of the cloud-shadows, like gigantic phantoms, as they swept rapidly over it, whilst the murmur of the rocking trees and the glancing of their bright leaves in the sun, produced a heartfelt pleasure, *the very memory of which arises in my imagination like some fading recollection of a brighter world.*

"At the foot of this hill ran a clear, deep-banked river, bounded on one side by a slip of rich level meadow, and on the other by a kind of common for the village geese, whose white feathers during the summer season lay scattered over its green surface. It was also the play-ground for the boys of the village school; for there ran that part of the river which, with very correct judgment, the urchins had selected as their bathing-place. A little slope or watering-ground in the bank brought them to the edge of the stream, where the bottom fell away into the fearful depths of the whirlpool under the hanging oak on the other bank. *Well do I remember the first time I ventured to swim across it, and even yet do I see in imagination the two bunches of water-flagons on which the inexperienced swimmers trusted themselves in the water.*"

*Evening in Italy.*

"The moon is up, and yet it is not night—  
Sunset divides the sky with her—a sea  
Of glory streams along the Alpine height  
Of blue Friuli's mountains: Heaven is free  
From clouds, but of all colours seems to be,—  
Melted to one vast Iris of the west,—  
Where the Day joins the past Eternity;  
While on the other hand, meek Dian's crest  
Floats through the azure air—an island of the blest.

"A single star is at her side, and reigns  
With her o'er half the lovely heaven; but still  
Yon sunny sea heaves brightly, and remains  
Rolled o'er the peak of the far Rhaetian hill,  
As day and night contending were, until  
Nature reclaimed her order:—gently flows  
The deep-dyed Brenta, where their hues instil  
The odorous purple of a new-born rose,  
Which streams upon her stream, and glassed within it  
glows.

"Filled with the face of heaven, which, from afar,  
Comes down upon its waters; all its hues,  
From the rich sunset to the rising star,  
Their magical variety diffuse:  
And now they change; a paler shadow strews  
Its mantle o'er the mountains; parting day  
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues  
With a new colour as it gasps away,  
The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone—and all is gray."

**Method of Descriptive Writing.**—From what has already been said the chief rules of descriptive writing can be deduced. The student may be advised generally to begin with an outline sketch of the scene to be described so as to put the reader in a position to understand any detail introduced as it affects the whole.

"It was a calm evening as the sun sank over the

almost motionless waters of hill-girt Windermere." In this admirable opening sentence the student is told that the time was evening, that there was no wind stirring (calm), that the sky and waters were placid, that the lake to be described was surrounded by hills. This is a scene which, with the help of memory and association, he has no difficulty in realising, and he is thus prepared to have its details presented in the succeeding sentences. The following fine sentence, the opening one in Goldsmith's description of a city by night, is an admirable model: "The clock has just struck two; the expiring taper rises and sinks in the socket; the watchman forgets the hour in slumber; the laborious and happy are at rest; and nothing wakes but meditation, guilt, revelry and despair". Here the student is given, in a few clauses, the heads of the essay which are afterwards developed with appropriate enlargement.

**Order in Description.**—In filling in the details of a picture, be careful only to select salient features. Do not overcrowd your description, above all things. As to the method of dealing with the several details, it is a very general fault with young students to jump from one point in a description to another entirely remote from the first. The result of this is mere confusion. Some *order* must be adopted, though there is no fixed routine method. In describing a landscape, after the opening outline sentence, it is a good plan to begin from the immediate surroundings of the person supposed to be describing the scene, and then gradually pass on to what painters call the middle distance, and finally to the horizon. Or the reverse order may be adopted, and the description begin from the horizon. If either of these courses is adopted, the student should be careful to suggest in his description, by the use of appropriate words, that distance, if it lends enchantment to a view, also diminishes the distinctness of the *outline* and *colour* of objects, and conceals *details*, and that consequently it is only objects near at hand that should, as a rule, be pictured in any detail, or with bright colours and sharp outlines. It should further be remembered that the

writer of the description is, generally speaking, supposed to be seeing it from a fixed point. If this is forgotten the relations of the objects in the scene will, of course, shift with every change of position by the observer, and the result will be confusion.

In describing a landscape remember that the introduction of *sounds* serves to give life and reality to the sketch. "The barking of a farm-dog," "The sound of a threshing machine," "The shouts of a band of school-boys in the play-yard of a village school," "The singing of a lark"—each and all serve, if judiciously employed, to lend truth and vivacity to a description. On the other hand, the idea of solitude or peace is emphasised either by the entire absence of sounds or the presence of sounds associated with night or deserted places. The student will remember the beautiful effect of peace which Gray obtains by the introduction of but a few unusual sounds suggestive of dusk and repose:—

"All the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his *droning* flight,  
And drowsy *tinklings* lull the distant folds;  
Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r  
The moping owl does to the moon *complain*."

In his famous description of Melrose Abbey, Scott gains a similar effect of lonely quiet by the introduction and contrast of the only two sounds to be heard:—

"When distant Tweed is heard to *rave*,  
And the owlet to *hoot* o'er the dead man's grave."

Life and colour also are given to a landscape by the description of rural employments, such as ploughing, shepherding, sowing, and so forth; or by alluding to the presence (say) of a fisherman on the banks of a stream.

The student should note all these points in the descriptions of the authors he reads, and should employ them in his own exercises. The more directly they are the result of his own observation, and *not the result of his reading recalled by memory*, the fresher and more vivid,

as a rule, will be their effect. The value of a description is moreover heightened by the judicious introduction of personal thoughts and memories suggested to the writer by the scene he is describing. In Carleton's description of an Irish village, quoted a few pages back, the italicized passages, which are of this kind, heighten considerably the grace and charm of the passage.

Still another method of describing a scene or a landscape is to group around some central object, which stands out boldly, all the other details of the view. Thus in a description of the Desert, the Sphinx or the Pyramids form natural focuses, so to speak, of description, and the reader's work of visualising the scene is greatly helped by giving him such a remarkable landmark to unify the impression. For a similar reason a description of the Lake of Geneva might fittingly begin from the famous Château de Chillon.

It is a valuable aid to clearness of effect to link the important details of the scene naturally together, and not to pass without transition from one to another. Thus a sentence like this: "Far out at sea a steamer left a trail of smoke; the sky was blue and the waves small, and on the beach some fishermen were mending their tackle," would read much better by arranging the details in some such manner as the following: "On the beach some fishermen were mending their tackle, the small waves breaking *almost at their feet*; while out at sea stood a steamer, *the dark smoke from which* was sharply outlined against the blue sky". Here it will be noticed the transition from the fishermen to the sea, a somewhat abrupt one, is made more natural by the phrase "*almost at their feet*," while the smoke of the steamer is used both to carry the reader over the other transition from the vessel to the sky, and to emphasise the colour of the latter. The following masterly description of Adam Bede in his carpenter's workshop is especially admirable by reason of the ease, naturalness, and grace with which the author combines the details in a picture of singular charm:—

*Description of Adam Bede.*

"The afternoon sun was warm on the five workmen there, busy upon doors and window-frames and wainscoting. A scent of pine-wood from a tent-like pile of planks outside the open door mingled itself with the scent of the elder-bushes which were spreading their summer snow close to the open window opposite; the slanting sunbeams shone through the transparent shavings that flew before the steady plane, and lit up the fine grain of the oak panelling which stood propped against the wall. On a heap of these soft shavings a rough gray shepherd dog had made himself a pleasant bed, and was lying with his nose between his forepaws, occasionally wrinkling his brows to cast a glance at the tallest of the five workmen, who was carving a shield in the centre of a wooden mantelpiece. It was to this workman that the strong baritone belonged which was heard above the sound of plane and hammer singing:—

'Awake my soul, and with the sun  
Thy daily stage of duty run;  
Shake off dull sloth . . .'

Here some measurement was to be taken which required more concentrated attention, and the sonorous voice subsided into a low whistle; but it presently broke out again with renewed vigour:—

'Let all thy converse be sincere,  
Thy conscience as the noonday clear.'

"Such a voice could only come from a broad chest, and the broad chest belonged to a large-boned muscular man, nearly six feet high, with a back so flat and a head so well-poised, that when he drew himself up to take a more distant survey of his work he had the air of a soldier standing at ease. The sleeve rolled up above the elbow showed an arm that was likely to win the prize for feats of strength; yet the large supple hand, with its bony finger tips, looked ready for works of skill. In his tall stalwartness Adam Bede was a Saxon, and justified his name; but the jet-black hair, made the

more noticeable by its contrast with the light paper cap, and the keen glance of the dark eyes that shone from under strongly-marked, prominent and mobile eye-brows, indicated a mixture of Celtic blood."

Note how naturally each feature of the scene as described is connected with what next follows—the sunlight with the shavings, the shavings with the dog, for which they form the bed, the glance of the dog leading to his master, the master's singing leading us to note his broad chest, the broad chest leading to a description of his stalwart frame, etc.

In describing "a day's excursion" or any such episode, the *time* order is the natural one to follow, and should, in general, be adhered to.

The details of a description must be few in number; they ought also to be important and characteristic. A few insignificant details would produce no picture at all; while, on the other hand, one or two suggestive details bring up before the mind a vivid picture. "To select from the sentiment, scene, or event described, those typical elements which carry many others along with them, and so, by saying a few things but suggesting many, to abridge the description, is," says Mr. Herbert Spencer, "the secret of producing a vivid impression. An extract from Tennyson's 'Mariana' will," he adds, "well illustrate this:—

' All day within the dreamy house,  
The doors upon their hinges creaked,  
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse  
Behind the mouldering wainscot shrieked,  
Or from the crevice peered about.' "

The several circumstances here specified bring with them many appropriate associations. Our attention is rarely drawn by the buzzing of a fly in the window save when the house is still; mice usually keep quiet, and it is only when extreme quietness reigns that they peep from their retreats. Hence each of the facts mentioned, presupposing numerous others, calls them up with more or less distinctness, and revives the feeling of dull solitude

with which they are connected in our experience. Were all those facts detailed, instead of suggested, the attention would be so frittered away that little impression of dreariness, such as is here intended, would be produced.

The student should not use hackneyed epithets, but should endeavour to find adjectives which, while truly describing the object, present it if possible in a new light.

The happy introduction of a simile or other figure of speech tends to light up a scene vividly. What, for example, could be finer than Wordsworth's

"It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free;  
The holy time is quiet as a Nun  
Breathless with adoration"?

The use of concrete terms is to be almost invariably recommended in description. Thus in the sentence: "At length a *sail* appeared on the horizon," a great deal of vividness is gained by the use of "sail" for "ship" by the figure of Synecdoche. Poetry may be studied, with advantage, as offering many examples of the happy employment of concrete for abstract terms.

#### (b) NARRATION.

The more direct and straightforward narrative writing is, the better. Realise clearly the point of the story you are going to tell; and only use such accessories of description as help it forward. *Describe facts in their natural order, and adhere wherever possible to time-sequence.* If you are asked to discuss some book that has interested you—say, a work of fiction—before you begin to write, jot down the leading details of the plot, and keep them before you so as to avoid any elaboration of unimportant events which would mar the *proportion of your essay*. Remember you have to compress into half a dozen pages of writing a narrative that occupies, say, from 200 to 400 pages of close print, and yet bring out the *gist* of the whole work. *Keep the end of the story in view from the beginning* so as not to be obliged to intro-

duce such awkward apologies for want of lucidity as, "This character, *I should have mentioned*, was in the hero's secret," or "I have forgotten to state that A. was a detective, and consequently skilled in sifting matters of the kind". A teacher might usefully read a short story to his class, bringing out the steps in the progress of the narrative, and making sure that the class understands their bearing on its development. These points might then be written out *seriatim* and the students set to reconstruct the story. This is a most effective exercise in composition. The merits that should be looked for in such essays are *conciseness, just emphasis on the chief stages of the plot, and the sense of a proper climax at the end.*

Under the head of narration may be placed biographical essays on great men. In such compositions the natural order of events—birth, education, early life, the story of his career and death, with a final estimate of your subject's character or an appreciation of his work—should be followed. The first three points—birth, education, early life—should, as a rule, be rapidly passed over, and the largest portion of the essay devoted to the career and special fame of the character described. Some appreciation of the work or character of the personage you are dealing with—whether he be a great general, a notable statesman, or a distinguished author—is much to be preferred to a mere chronological outline of the events or productions of his career. In Chapter VIII. the points for a short model essay on a biographical subject will be found.

#### (c) EXPOSITION.

To make an exposition of a subject is to set forth in brief lucid form its meaning or explanation. You have to employ exposition in treating (1) moral or reflective themes such as "Honesty," or "The paths of glory lead but to the grave," and (2) in describing what a "Steam-engine" or "Electricity" is. Examples of each class of these subjects, and some practical hints on the manner of treating them, are given in Chapter VIII. In general, it may be said here, that the student

should make sure at the outset that he understands the point of the subject in what are called moral or reflective essays. Thus if he finds such a quotation as:—

“How small of all that human hearts endure

That part which laws or kings can cause or cure”—

he should at once set about putting the exact meaning of the couplet into prose in some such way as this: “Human happiness is not increased or diminished by the action of laws or kings. It depends rather on the right ordering of a man's life according to the dictates of conscience and the teachings of religion.” The essay should be written on this prose paraphrase by illustrating it in various ways and with appropriate examples. As headings for such an essay the following points may be suggested, supposing the student affirms the truth of the couplet:—

Is the couplet true? Yes; because man's happiness is not to be found in those things which kings and laws have power over. Kings and human laws are concerned with this world and its interests. True happiness lies elsewhere. Alexander the Great and Napoleon were kings, and could make their own laws, yet they were not truly happy. The Christian martyrs, torn to pieces by wild beasts in the arena, were the victims of cruel kings and unjust laws; yet true happiness was theirs. Virtue, which brings man happiness, has flourished under the most iniquitous tyrannies; while vice, the destroyer of man's felicity, is to be found in countries whose government and laws leave little to be desired. Further, as Goldsmith points out, happiness is found in every land and under the most diverse constitutions—a proof that no set form of government is essential to its existence. But we must restrict the term “laws” in the couplet to human positive laws—the laws which kings make. Natural law, and, still more, Divine law, have much indeed to do with the making or marring of man's happiness. The observance of these secures the perfection of his nature, in which his true happiness consists. These laws, however, were obviously not in the contemplation of the poet; and, consequently, the

truth of his lines, is, as we have shown, endorsed at once by reason and experience.

The student should, then, always make certain that he understands exactly the subject of the essay before entering on a discussion of it. Five or ten minutes spent in the effort to do this will not be misspent.

In regard to subjects like "War," "Electricity," "The Steam Engine," it is well also to begin with a definition, or at least a description. Take, for example, the third of the essays suggested. The student, likely enough, may not be familiar with the detailed construction of a steam-engine, and may, therefore, be at a loss what to say on such a theme. But, if he adopts the method suggested in an earlier chapter of this book, the jotting down in a kind of short-hand of the ideas that come to him, he will find, as a rule, that he can, if not throw very much light on the construction of a locomotive, at least write a readable essay for which the title "The Steam Engine" will not be an inappropriate heading. A few suggestive jottings are here set down to illustrate what is meant:—

"Steam-engine—Motive power—Expansion of steam—Anecdote of boiling kettle raising the lid—Great discoveries often made by chance—Watts—George Stephenson—Early panic lest the steam engine should go at twelve miles an hour—How ridiculous it seems now when sixty miles an hour is not uncommon—The old stage-coach was a very leisurely mode of conveyance—Perhaps it had its advantages—Modern and old-world travelling contrasted—Is the day coming when, thanks to electricity, we shall think even the steam engine slow?"

Every one will have his own associations, but the above specimen will serve to illustrate the truth that something may be made out of what seems to the student, at first sight, an unpromising subject.

#### (d) ARGUMENTATION.

To defend or criticise a proposition by stating succinctly the arguments for and against it is what is

meant, broadly speaking, by argumentation. Most of the rules dealing with this method of composition are logical and not rhetorical. They are thus outside the scope of this elementary treatise. Moreover, it is seldom that a subject requiring great logical acumen and power of marshalling arguments has to be dealt with by young students. At the same time such questions as, "Was Byron or Wordsworth the greater poet?" "Is Electricity destined to supplant steam as a motive power?" and so forth, require some skill in handling the arguments *pro* and *con*. In this style of composition the reasons for each statement should be clearly and concisely stated on the one side and the other; and the conclusion should consist of a balancing of the arguments on both sides and a verdict of a definite kind, if a conclusion is come to. In other respects the rules already given for other styles of writing are sufficient.

(e) LETTER-WRITING.

In writing letters, the rules for the correct framing of sentences must be observed as faithfully as in other compositions. More freedom and familiarity is permitted, especially where the writer is addressing an intimate friend. But, even in this case, slang expressions and other kinds of vulgarity are to be avoided. It may be laid down as a rule that, in letters, we should address those to whom we write in the language we should use if we were speaking to them. Stilted, pedantic, laboured sentences are specially out of place in letters. According to the advice of Goldsmith, "be easy and free, without being free and easy".

No exercise in composition is more useful than letter-writing, as a means to acquire simplicity and directness of style. Nor is any literary exercise of greater practical utility. It will not happen to everyone to write a book or to contribute to a newspaper, but everyone will have frequent occasion to write letters.

Be careful to observe the established forms in beginning and ending letters. The address of the writer and the date of writing should be legibly written at the top

of the first page. A business letter should begin *Sir*, *Dear Sir*, or *Gentlemen*, or *Dear Sirs*, as the case may require. Letters between friends will be less formal. The correspondent may be addressed by his surname or Christian name, with *Dear* or *My Dear* prefixed, according to the degree of familiarity. The letter may conclude with: *Yours truly*, *Yours very truly*, *Yours faithfully*, *Yours sincerely*, etc. Business or official letters require a more formal ending, and this must never be omitted.

The first thing to *think* about in correspondence is what you have to tell; the second thing is how you can tell it in the most acceptable manner.

There are two methods of description—one in bare outlines; the other in such graphic touches as impart life and vigour to the statement.

Much of the courtesy of life depends upon the power of using the pen with grace and appropriateness, to convey one's own bodily self, as it were, to one's correspondent and thus to render one's letters welcome to one's friends. The best letters are generally those which have been written with the greatest ease; but ease and simplicity must not be understood as permitting carelessness.

In writing to the most intimate friend, a certain amount of attention both to the style and the subject is necessary and becoming. A slovenly and negligent manner of writing shows a want of respect. An imprudent expression in conversation may be forgiven and pass away; but we should remember when we take the pen in hand that what is written remains.

Be careful, even in the familiar style, how you employ puns and other jests. They are very dangerous weapons even in the most skilful hands. "Sacrifice your joke rather than risk the loss of your friend."

**Commercial Letters** should be as clear and concise as possible, brevity and neatness being the two principal requisites. Write just as much as is necessary, but write no more. Avoid all ambiguity, as it may cause great loss of time if not a more serious loss.

Before you sit down to write a letter on any subject, think well what you intend to say; for if you have to seek the matter as you write, your style will most likely be stiff and inelegant.

If you have to answer an important letter, give the subject very careful consideration, and write your reply with the letter before you.

When writing a business letter, especially avoid abbreviations, such as I've, can't, etc.; also avoid postscripts.

**Official Letters** are generally written upon foolscap paper, and are more precise and formal than private communications. In private letters we express our thoughts and feelings familiarly, in a direct, simple, natural manner; but an official letter is characterised by the absence of all familiarity and of all manifestation of feeling; it usually confines itself to a dry statement of facts and arguments, and its language is as dignified as in a book of history. An official letter may contain a report, or a request, or an application for a situation, or a reply to a request for information. The tone and style should be respectful and courteous.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PARAPHRASING.

**Its Value.**—Paraphrasing is a useful and beneficial exercise, for it trains (1) to habits of care and discrimination in the choice of correct and applicable words ; (2) binds the learner's attention to every word and phrase, and (3) by it we ascertain whether he has fully and accurately grasped and understood the force and meaning of the underlying thought. It stands in an English course in place of translations into Latin or Greek. It trains to preciseness of expression, fosters a taste for the beautiful, and exercises a refining power over language. Yet the result is often disappointing, as the passage, when paraphrased, loses much of its beauty. A paraphrase has been likened to a torpedo, from its making the most vivid sentiments lifeless, and the most sublime flat and tame. An excellent test of a good paraphrase is that it should be an honest equivalent for the original, though only silver for gold ; and that it should be capable of standing alone, should the author's own words be forgotten. Progress in paraphrasing will depend on the teacher's reading, his taste, nice discrimination, and keen relish for good thoughts forcibly, elegantly, and concisely expressed.

#### ITS MEANING, VALUE AND PURPOSE.

A paraphrase is a reproduction of the same thought in different words ; a loose or free translation.

Exercises in paraphrasing are set at examinations as a test of intelligence. Firstly, the candidate must be able to appreciate the precise sense in which certain

words are used. It is this power which enables a person to read with expression.

Secondly, he must be able to express the meaning of the passage in language of his own. In this respect it is a test of composition.

#### RULES AND EXAMPLES.

The most common error with young pupils is to attempt to paraphrase an exercise by a mere substitution of synonyms, and the result is often a meaningless or ridiculous passage. This happens because there are some words for which it is impossible to find an exact substitute, and even words that are commonly considered as synonyms have shades of difference in their meanings which are very noticeable when we try to put the synonyms in place of one another in the same sentence.

EXAMPLE 1.—“*Conversation enriches the understanding.*” By substitution we might say: “Talk improves the mind”. “Talk” and “conversation” do not mean precisely the same, although they are frequently used as synonyms, and it will be much better to make an entirely new sentence, as “We gain information by talking with others”; or, “By conversing with others we acquire wisdom”.

EXAMPLE 2.—“*Sincerity is the basis of every virtue.*” By substitution we might say: “Truth is the foundation of all goodness,” but “sincerity” is more than “truth”. Truth has reference more to language, and sincerity to both words and actions. A better paraphrase would be a completely new sentence, as: “All the qualities that go to make a good character are worthless if accompanied with deception”.

Again: “*That state of life is most happy where superfluities are not required, and necessities are not wanting*”. This might be rendered: “That condition of life is most agreeable where excess of things is not wanted, and needful things are not absent”; but a better paraphrase would be: “Those people are happiest who have enough to keep them in health, and do not look for more”.

In paraphrasing "Figures of Speech" mere substitution often produces a ludicrous translation, as is seen in the following, furnished by one of H.M. Inspectors from an examination paper: "*As monumental bronze unchanged his look*". This was changed into: "*His countenance was fixed as though it had been a memorial of copper and zinc*". What is wanted is a complete change of words expressing the sense of the passage, as "*His face was no index of his feelings*"; or, "*One could not tell by his face what his feelings were*".

(a) Occasionally it will be found necessary to retain some of the words of the passage set, as their meaning cannot be expressed by equivalents, and definitions and explanations will spoil the paraphrase.

EXAMPLE 1:—

"*Gradual development appears to be the law of Nature.*"

"In nature all growths and alterations are slow—nothing is sudden."

Here it is difficult to find an equivalent for "Nature," unless it be an explanation or definition of the word, which will quite spoil the paraphrase.

EXAMPLE 2:—

"Is the spot marked by no colossal bust?"

"Is the place not shown by any huge figure of the head and chest of a person?"

The latter is an example of substitution, with an explanation of what a bust is. The sense of the passage is better rendered:—

"Is not the place honoured by a memorial?"

(b) General terms may sometimes be substituted for particular ones, or *vice versa*, as:—

EXAMPLE 1:—

"*The terrified inhabitants were driving their horses, cows and sheep to the hills.*"

Instead of "horses, cows and sheep," we may say "cattle".

## EXAMPLE 2:—

*"The mother of the fine arts is luxury."*

"Music, sculpture, and painting flourish best where there is wealth."

## EXAMPLE 3:—

"'Tis a very good world we live in,  
To lend or spend, or to give in ;

But to beg, or to borrow, or get a man's own,

'Tis the very worst world that ever was known."

"People are very nice with us as long as they are getting something from us, but as soon as we want something from them they become very disagreeable."

Here "lending," "spending," and "giving," are expressed as "getting something from us," or "receiving favours".

(c) Archaic words and constructions should not be retained, and references to old-fashioned beliefs and ideas should be modernised as far as possible.

## EXAMPLE 1:—

*"Nobility attempers sovereignty."*—BACON.

"Nobles moderate the power of a monarch."  
(attempers is obsolete).

## EXAMPLE 2:—

*"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our STARS,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."*

People formerly believed that lives were influenced for bad or good according to the planets under which they were born.

"We cannot blame fate, but must blame ourselves,  
that we are nobodies."

## EXAMPLE 3:—

*"Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in its head."*

This old belief of the jewel in the toad's head need not be retained in the paraphrase, thus:—

"Misfortune is never desirable, but it generally brings benefit to the one who meets with it."

(d) In paraphrasing we must confine ourselves to the exact ideas of the text. If we make use of new facts or ideas, it partakes then of the nature of exposition or explanation.

EXAMPLE 1:—

*"How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds  
Makes ill deeds done."*

*Explanation.*—"King John here tries to throw the blame of Arthur's murder on to Hubert. He suggests that Hubert was by nature too wicked to be near him, too suggestive of murder, and too ready to follow out his evil designs."

This is not paraphrase but explanation, and would be quite acceptable where explanation is asked for and not paraphrase.

Young students sometimes use the text as the basis of a brief sermon or discourse by enlarging on the words and ideas of the text, thus:—

"If we wish to avoid wrong-doing, we must not go where evil is. Many a prisoner has confessed that he was led into a career of crime by associating with wicked companions, and frequenting sinful places. If we keep as far as possible from evil, we shall not be tempted to commit it."

What is required is a brief paraphrase, as:—

"Opportunities of wrong-doing are a fruitful cause of crime."

EXAMPLE 2:—

*"All that glitters is not gold."*

"Gold is of a yellow glossy colour. It is very valuable, and in consequence men cover cheap substances with a thin layer of gold and people are thus deceived as to the value of the articles."

The above is explanation. In paraphrase we express the thought in preference to the language, thus:—

"Things are not always as good as they appear to be."

(e) Often selections are set from the old writers which are badly punctuated. In such cases the sense of the passages and not the punctuation should determine which clauses may be grouped together.

EXAMPLE 1:—

"It seems to me most strange that men should  
fear;

Seeing that death, a necessary end,

Will come when it will come."—JULIUS CÆSAR.

The correct punctuation should be a comma after "fear" and not a semi-colon, hence the three lines should be paraphrased together. If a semi-colon is placed after "fear," the principal and subordinate sentences will be separated.

EXAMPLE 2:—

*"Above all things, order and distribution, and singling  
out of parts, is the gift of dispatch; so as the dis-  
tribution be not too subtile."*

"Method and arrangement are helps to business if  
they are not made too much of, so as to be-  
come hindrances."

N.B.—The semi-colon after "dispatch" should be a  
comma.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MISCELLANEOUS.

**Notes for Students.**—There is but one way of making acquaintance with the correct and graceful forms of language—the study of them in the works of the great writers. The mere learning of rules will be of little avail. No book-study of the principles of architecture would enable us to form for ourselves a true idea of the grandeur of St. Paul's Cathedral; neither will the study of theories of composition enable us to appreciate the merits and requirements of a finished composition. Contact with the masterpieces in which these theories are realised is the only way of learning to realise them for ourselves. If we will not read we shall never write.

**Method of Reading and Practice.**—There is reading and reading. We may pass over the ideas which succeed one another in the classical works we take up without any attention to the order in which the ideas are expressed, or to the devices of language by which force and beauty are added to them. If we read in this way, we shall never understand the means by which the clearness, grace, and power of a perfect composition are secured.

In reading the works of the masters of style—or the portions of those works which enter into the school course—the young student should, first of all, assure himself that he understands the exact value of each word used, and so has a correct idea of the author's meaning. Then he should examine carefully the sentences which seem to him to possess special beauty or power, and find out for himself how these effects are produced, observe the choice and arrangement of words,

the logical, as distinguished from the grammatical, structure of the sentences, and figures of speech, employed, the formation of paragraphs, the order in which the various ideas are introduced so as ultimately to secure most effectually the writer's purpose. These points might be noted, as the student reads, either in a separate book or on the margin of the page. Practice of this kind will soon make him familiar with the means and methods of successful composition. But it is not enough to know the principles of good composition; we must further acquire the power of applying those principles ourselves. There is only one means to this end—constant and careful exercise. We must endeavour to imitate the perfections which we observe in the compositions of the best writers. When we make this attempt, we shall conceive a higher idea of their merits. When the student sets himself to compose a Latin hexameter describing the roaring of the storm, he begins to see new perfections in Virgil's lines on the same theme.

A good way to carry out the practice here recommended would be to select some passages from a classical writer in which a familiar scene is described, or an anecdote told, or an event of history narrated, or some remarkable character sketched. Read over the passage once or twice, so as to get a good idea of its general import. Then close the book, and set to work to embody in your own words the ideas given you. When you have finished, compare your work with the model you have selected, note where you have fallen short of the ideal, and then have the patience to rewrite your composition, improving it at the points where you have found it defective. In a little time, you will acquire a facility for planning a composition independently, and the sense of what is correct in words and effective in the structure and arrangement of sentences will grow on you.

If, later, you are required to use your powers in an examination room, you will be able to choose from the subjects offered you that with which you are best able

to deal; you will be able to sketch the plan of your composition without hurry or confusion, and to work it out in graceful and effective detail.

**Hints to Teachers.**—In training pupils to write, begin with the method suggested at the close of the preceding section. Read for them, once or twice, an anecdote, a description of scenery, or a sketch of a man's appearance or character, or other simple extract complete in itself, which you have selected from an approved author. Make sure that they thoroughly understand what you have read. Call their attention to the more important features of the composition you are setting before them, the order in which the objects are introduced into the description, the order in which the events of the narrative follow one another, the main lines in the picture of the outer man, or of the mental character, as traced. When this has been done, let them strive as best they can to express, after the manner of the original, the ideas given them. Compare their work when it is finished with the model set before them, point out their defects, read again for them the original extract—they will now appreciate it better. When they have thus realised their shortcomings, let them re-write the exercise. The second attempt will usually show a great improvement on the first. Improvements thus secured indicate genuine progress.

**Choice of Subjects.**—When selecting extracts as models for students' exercises, do not choose subjects with which they are wholly unfamiliar. To exercise them in describing unfamiliar objects is to accustom them to use words to which they attach no meaning. Do not ask them to describe things which they have never seen, or characters of which they have no experience, or incidents wholly unlike those which they have met with in life. Require them to portray clearly and gracefully what they have seen and know, not to create mere figments of imagination. The inside of the class-room, the scene visible from the college or school window, the lane, road, or street through which they have passed on their way to college or school, the

persons they have met on the way, the diary of a day at school, a bird's nest they have found in a hedge, the habits of the animals they are familiar with at home, their latest walk in the country, or a visit to the seaside—these are the most fitting subjects for them. On these they will write with knowledge, and to have something to say is the first condition of good writing.

If you ask them for a sketch of human character, let it be of a type such as they will meet among their companions. In all these matters insist on the student stating what he has actually seen; do not accept commonplaces or fancies for actual realities. In this way you will teach your pupil to observe as well as to think, and training the faculty of observation is an essential part of education.

Moral and abstract themes are, for the most part, out of place in school exercises of composition. It is only after school life is ended that the mind is capable of the thought required for such subjects. If they are given at all to the schoolboy, let him deal with them rather by means of concrete illustrations taken from his experience or his reading, than by abstract speculations.

**In Correction take one Class of Faults at a Time.**—The teacher should confine the time given to the correction of essays—which should be always done in the presence of the whole class—to the discussion and explanation of one class of faults. It will, as a rule, be found that the essays of young writers agree in a great measure in the kind of mistake made. This will justify exclusive attention, on the part of the master, to a single topic, such as "*punctuation*," the "*correct use of words*," "*faultily-constructed sentences*," "*errors in paragraph-structure*," and so forth. The true theory on one or other of these matters should be explained carefully and illustrated in contrast with the mistakes of the day's essays. It will, of course, happen commonly that more than one leading principle of composition, or even all of them, are violated; but this should not be allowed to interrupt the suggested plan of confining each lesson to one particular kind of error. Any attempt at overtaking and explain-

ing every mistake in all the essays of a class will result in mere confusion. It need hardly be said that the correction here referred to is the public class-lesson. There is no objection whatever to marking in blue pencil on the separate essays whatever mistakes may be present in them.

### MODEL ESSAYS.

NOTE.—The subjects for these essays have been selected from those set at the recent University and Teachers' Examinations. They make no pretension to a finished treatment of their subjects, but have been written with a view to exemplify the methods laid down in the earlier pages of this book.

Before attempting the complete essay the student should in all cases first draw up an OUTLINE giving the points to be treated upon, and the order of treatment. This will not only enable him to produce a well-balanced essay, but it will afford an excellent training in determining what are the salient points, and in treating them at such length as is due to their relative importance.

A carefully prepared outline will also ensure that the paragraphs of the essay are arranged in proper order, either IN THE ORDER OF TIME (Chronological), as in biographical and historical essays, where we relate events as they occur; or IN THE ORDER OF REASON (Logical), as in essays on general subjects and in moral essays.

All matter not bearing strictly on the subject of the essay should be omitted.

### THE PLEASURES AND ADVANTAGES OF CYCLING.

#### *Points.*

#### PLEASURES.

#### ADVANTAGES.

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. In open air and fine weather winter and summer. | 1. Health.      |
| 2. Sense of power and delight of speed.            | 2. Educational. |

## PLEASURES.

## ADVANTAGES.

3. Brings beautiful scenery within reach of city folk.
3. Comparative cheapness.
4. Social pleasure.

Few forms of exercise have so quickly and universally recommended themselves to popularity as cycling. Within a comparatively short period the cycle has established itself almost as a necessity of daily life. By comparison, other forms of outdoor amusement—football, tennis, and even cricket may be said to be quite limited in their appeal to popular taste. It would indeed seem as if at last an ideal form of exercise had been discovered, and that henceforth man will be as truly “a cycling animal” as “a cooking animal”.

It is, consequently, worth inquiring what are the peculiar pleasures and advantages of cycling which have won for it this pre-eminent place in popular favour. (1) In common with most other outdoor sports it brings with it fresh air, and implies for its enjoyment fine weather. But the cyclist is not, as the cricketer, for instance, limited during the course of his pastime to one place. On the contrary, it is of the very nature of this delightful exercise that the scene should be ever shifting and with it all the varied aspects of Nature's loveliness. It is no uncommon experience for a cyclist to enjoy, in a good day's run, the scenic charms of sea and mountain, of valley and plain, by a judicious use of exercise. With the precautions that good sense suggests, it has received the unqualified approval of the medical profession as an admirable and most health-giving pastime. Personal experience has borne out fully this general verdict; and, if anyone has suffered in health from cycling, the result is due rather to the abuse of the exercise than to any inherent danger in itself. That it should be healthful is the first essential of any game; but cycling has far more than this to recommend it. (2) It may prove of high educational value. Our knowledge of local geography and history—and thereby our general appreciation of these subjects—is increased immensely by the excursions which the cycle has enabled us to make,

with moderate cost, in the space of a day's ride. It is now a generally received theory that a study of geography should begin with the investigation of the immediate surroundings of the district in which we live. Most of the geographical terms in use could, for instance, be explained and practically illustrated in the course of a cycling ride. How much more vivid our idea of these objects becomes by seeing them than by reading about them in a book. Yet how seldom is this sensible procedure put into practice? What applies to geography may be said of history with at least equal truth. Especially is this so in a country like South Africa, which abounds with centres of historic and antiquarian interest well within reach of the cyclist. It would not at all surprise us if the cyclist should prove the predecessor of the local annalist, and if the revival of a good many decaying traditions should follow on the excursions of the wheelman. But you may say that trains and cars have always been available to most of our places of historic or other interest. (3) The answer to this difficulty brings us to the consideration of another of the advantages of the cycle—its comparative cheapness. In no other form of exercise is the outlay really so moderate. The original cost—let us say £12 as an average—seems high; but a good machine should last four years, and this gives but an annual expenditure of £3. If we add 5s. per annum for repairs, what a splendid return in health and pleasure, in physical and mental culture, may we obtain for £4 a year. In no other way, it is safe to say, could we get so fruitful a return for our expenditure having regard to the pleasure and advantages which have been touched on. How inadequate, for instance, would £4 be in payment of a year's train-fares, even if one made an excursion but twice a week. Everything considered, it must be admitted that cycling is not, even now, an expensive amusement; and, in time to come, its present expenses are certain to be reduced.

It was not our business to call attention to any of the drawbacks of the exercise; the subject of the essay was confined to its pleasures and advantages. Even though

we have not enumerated all these, enough has been suggested to prove cycling one of the most delightful forms of exercise that exist.

#### MOUNTAIN SCENERY IN CAPE COLONY.

*Points.*—(1) Striking aspects of mountains—Their varieties of shape and character. (2) Bold effects of scenery, gorges, chasms, mountain-torrents. (3) Monotony of the landscape of a country without mountains, *e.g.* Holland. (4) Our own country boasts of splendid mountains.

(1) Mountain scenery offers us one of the most attractive and sublime aspects of Nature. From the snow-capped Alps to the verdure-covered hills of our own country, what a variety of form and appearance do not mountains present! In every landscape where they are present, their bold outlines first attract the eye, and serve as a frame to a beautiful picture. Piercing the sky, they stand, like silent sentinels, and inspire us with a feeling of awe. What violent results of Nature's force do these heights not represent! So silent and peaceful now they seem to have been always as serene. But the man of science knows that they bear on them the traces of their origin and growth, and to eyes that can see they reveal many a story of ancient struggle and strife. (2) When we approach to view these mountains "with closer eyes," how bold are the scenic effects! Ravines and gorges on every hand. Here, perhaps, a mountain lake formed in the crater of an extinct volcano. There a fold of the hill forms a shelter for the innumerable ferns and wild flowers that seek the fertile valleys. On every hand, beauty in manifold forms marks the surface of the mountain, and gives it character. In the distance all these beauties seem but hues and tints of the mountain itself, but when we are close at hand we recognise every detail of flower, heath and crag that has gone to make the beautiful effect. (3) How monotonous to the eye is not a landscape without mountains? Holland, with its level meadows and meandering canals, has, no doubt, a charm of its own,

but how much more beautiful are such landscapes as are to be found in the mountainous districts of our own Colony, such as Table Mountain, Hex River, Tulbagh, and Caledon. Indeed, in mountain scenery our Colony is especially rich. With the exception of a few vleis of small extent, there is no part of the Colony which cannot boast of beautiful and sublime mountain effects. Hence we come to the varied aspects of the scenery which makes the Peninsula so favourite a tourist resort. The eye likes variety; and when mountain and valley and sea combine to form the landscape, as they do so often throughout the Colony, the ideal of scenic landscape is reached.

#### THE USE OF THE STUDY OF HISTORY.

*Points.*—Meaning of “use”—All study useful—These studies most *useful* in practical life, in which the actions of men and the progress and decline of societies and nations are reviewed—History has been called the politics of the past; and politics the history of the present—But history is more than a chronicle of political changes—Rightly conceived, it should show us men in their religious, social, economic, educational, and political progress—Carlyle: History, the biographies of great men—This study most useful because the problems of life do not radically change—History repeats itself, and we may learn from the successes as from the failure of the past—The study of history thus widens our experience enormously, and strengthens our judgment of men and things—Universities—French Revolution—We are “the heirs of all the ages”.

In speaking of the “use” of any study we may refer to its practical utility for the conduct of our life or for the purposes of our chosen profession, or to its mental value as an intellectual discipline. Most studies, if properly directed, are useful in the second sense. They develop, some one, some another, of our faculties; and thus supply an admirable training. But when we speak of the “use of the study of history,” we refer rather to practical utility of the former kind—to its usefulness,

namely, in educating our judgment on men and things by showing us the lives and actions of people removed from us in time.

Our judgments of the events passing round us, and of the men with whom we touch shoulders, are apt to be prejudiced unduly by our inclinations and passions. These disturbing elements have little or no play, however, when we are presented by the historian with the record of men and actions which have had their day centuries ago. History has been called by Freeman, "the politics of the past, as politics is the history of the present". But from the politics with which history is concerned all the bitterness of faction and all the falsehood of party judgments may be eliminated, and men and things seen in their true nature and relations.

Moreover, history is not "the politics of the past" in any narrow sense of the word "politics". It is the record, to take Goldsmith's distinction, not of "party" but of mankind. Rightly conceived, the duty of the historian is to show us, not merely the political changes in the nation—the shock of battles and the fall of dynasties—but to depict also *the life of the people*, their religious, social, educational, literary, and artistic evolution. Carlyle spoke of history as composed of "the biographies of great men"; but it should be much more than that, even if we suppose our "heroes" and "hero-worship" to be of the purest kind—which cannot be said of Carlyle's idolatry. History should present us with a true chronicle of the "manners and customs," in the widest sense of these terms, of the different ages of the world's progress.

The study of history written in accordance with this idea is most valuable for many reasons. For one thing, the problems of life—its struggles and its temptations at any rate—do not change from century to century. History repeats itself; and we can learn alike from the failures and the successes of other times. In this way, history, rightly interpreted, supplies us with what is of value in a wide experience without the disillusion and heart-burnings that usually accompany it. Experience

is said to be a stern teacher; but, in history, the teacher has lost all his asperity without losing any of his wisdom. We learn, so to speak, at the expense of others. "The footprints on the sands of time," of which the poet speaks, are for us signs of warning and of encouragement. Human nature has not altered since the dawn of history. It, at any rate, is one abiding factor in the changes of time, and consequently we can, with hope of profit, draw from its impulses in other times and under conditions not altogether dissimilar from those by which we are surrounded, practical conclusions that may prove of distinct value in the conduct of our own lives.

Again, the intelligent study of history serves to strengthen our power of judging correctly of contemporary events. We learn, from the records of the past, to see in the problems of the day the essential facts, and to distinguish what is likely to be of merely passing importance from those elements that form the permanent conditions of the case. The study of the history of the universities of the past, for example; of the circumstances that in each country modified their growth and constitution; of the causes underlying the success of those that have survived, and of the nature of the success itself, should form a necessary—as it would prove a most valuable—prelude to the work of inaugurating any new institution of the kind. Again, to take an instance of another kind, what "counsels of wisdom" have not thinking minds, such as Burke and Taine, drawn from that great fact of history the French Revolution! The serious study, under the guidance of a great thinker like Burke, of a dreadful episode of this kind in political philosophy, cannot fail to be deeply instructive. The lessons of the Revolution are manifold and pertinent to our own times, and they can only be neglected by those whom they concern, at their own peril.

In conclusion, it should not be forgotten that our own times are the direct inheritors of past ages. A knowledge of history is essential to the understanding of any single institution or custom which exists amongst

us to-day. Institutions and customs alike have their roots in the past. Society and civilisation, as we know them, are growths whose full meaning is inexplicable without an acquaintance with their history. Hence the fruitfulness of a study of that history which not merely enlarges our experience and strengthens our judgment, but also shows us at work the forces which have resulted in the state of political and social life we see around us.

#### NAPOLEON.

*Points.*—Napoleon's place in history—Birth—Education—Early career as a soldier—Rise to power—Devotion of his soldiers—Personal ambition—His weakness—His fall.

Napoleon Bonaparte is by many considered the greatest general of ancient or modern times. He was outmanœuvred at Waterloo by Wellington, but the English soldier was not the equal of his rival in any of the qualities which go to make the consummate military commander. We must go back to Cæsar, Hannibal, or Alexander the Great to find any one who for "genius in the field" can be named beside the "Little Corporal," as Napoleon's troops loved to call him; and the conditions of warfare in the ancient world were so different from those which obtained at the beginning of the last century, when Napoleon was at the height of his fame, that no comparison between his achievements and those of the great generals we have just mentioned can well be established.

Napoleon was not a precocious genius, though he early showed a taste for those studies, such as engineering, which were to prove of service to him in his career. He was born at Ajaccio in Corsica, August 15th, 1769, the son of a notary, and one of a large family. His father died in the prime of life, and left but a small pittance for the widow and family. Napoleon was brought up in the military school at Brienne, where, as has been said, his military instincts quickly showed themselves. As early as the commencement of the

French Revolution we find him a lieutenant, and serving with some distinction at the siege of Toulon. In 1794 he went to Italy as general of artillery, and showed such ability that, in a short time, he was appointed to the chief command. The battle of Lodi, fought in May, 1796, was his first striking achievement, and from that date on, the progress of the French army under his command spread the fame of Bonaparte all over Europe.

Henceforth, till his fall in 1815, the name and achievements of Napoleon are the subjects of history. Whether in Italy, Egypt, Austria, Prussia, or Russia, victory, almost uninterrupted, followed his arms. To crowd into a brief essay the fateful events of those twenty years is simply impossible. The very names of the battles which Napoleon fought would occupy a considerable space. Never, it may be said, was a general better served by his troops. Napoleon had that personal magnetism which compels absolute and whole-hearted loyalty. His personal courage, his amazing dash, his self-confidence, his ready solution of difficulties—all inspired his men with the idea that he was unconquerable. The anecdotes illustrating both his military genius and the devotion he inspired are innumerable. But Napoleon's genius seems to have abandoned him when he put aside his sword. He had not the qualities which make the statesman, and it was gradually recognised in France that he was urged in his career by vast personal ambition rather than by a genuine patriotism. Each victory he won was but the prelude to another. France gave him her best men; but they were sacrificed, in Napoleon's hands, not to the building up of a great empire, but to his own desire of glory and personal aggrandisement. Here we touch on the weak side of Napoleon's character—his want of what may be called moral force. War was to him an end in itself, not a means. In times of peace he was almost as impotent as when he stood an exile in St. Helena, after Waterloo. Of that constructive genius which builds up permanent political structures he had little. Hence it is that,

when we come to test his career by any positive canons, we find it almost as barren as it seemed, and in a sense was, brilliant. His "vaulting ambition" overleaped itself. He has, indeed, left a name in history that will not readily be forgotten, but he has left little else.

"A LITTLE LEARNING IS A DANGEROUS THING."

*Points.*—Meaning of the saying—No learning in itself dangerous; only so because half-knowledge in some minds leads to conceit and narrowness—This, however, is not the effect of learning—The best seed on a mean soil will produce but an indifferent crop—The ill effects of "a little learning" are therefore due to the character of the recipient—Hence the proverb is untrue as a general statement—Newton, Socrates, the Sophists—To a man of sound sense and good judgment even a little learning may be of great value—"Put a beggar on horseback"—Tennyson, "Knowledge comes but wisdom lingers".

Pope's epigram, "a little learning is a dangerous thing," like most sayings of the kind, contains but a half-truth. For, strictly speaking, all learning, without regard to its quantity, is valuable; and, on the other hand, vast erudition has proved the bane of minds led astray by intellectual pride. What the poet means is, that there are people so naturally conceited and narrow-minded that a little learning, like a little wine in the case of the physically weak, *goes to their head*. They are puffed up by their half-knowledge, and are apt to be dogmatic in exact proportion as they are ignorant. This stupid arrogance is not, however, the effect of "a little learning". The best seed on a mean soil will produce but an indifferent crop. The best wine will intoxicate a child more surely than a poorer drink. And so learning, however valuable in itself, will serve but to intensify the defects of a character naturally vain and shallow.

The danger, then, lies not chiefly—indeed, not at all—in the learning, but in the recipient of the knowledge. To those with proper qualities of mind and character every

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addition to one's stock of knowledge brings with it a sense of humility in presence of the immense extent of the ignorance of even the wisest amongst men. Newton, as fine a genius as the world has seen, was ever conscious of the insignificance of what he knew of Nature and her laws compared with what remained shrouded in mystery. Socrates, "the wisest amongst the sons of men," was ostentatiously—if somewhat ironically—frank as to his own ignorance. He professed his only true knowledge to be the consciousness that he knew nothing, and set over against this profession the pretended omniscience of the Sophists. The latter, by the way, offer admirable types of the dangerous effects of a little learning—shallow rhetoricians that they were.

It follows that, to a well-balanced mind, even a little learning may prove not dangerous but most salutary. If it is true that knowledge is power, a man of sound sense and good judgment will be but strengthened by every increase of learning that comes to him. Instead of being carried away by any idea of his own importance, his natural shrewdness will counsel him to use his acquisition to the best advantage. Such a one will remember the old saying, "Put a beggar on horseback and he'll ride to destruction!" and apply it to his own case. If the recipient of a little learning is one who is raised above his former position by the extent of his knowledge, he may be tempted to mental extravagance—of the kind already suggested—in the same way that the suddenly enriched beggar, without prudence or judgment, rushes to his ruin. Knowledge, like wealth, is relative, and as the richest of us, so "the wisest amongst men" is but poor in comparison with the stock of conceivable possessions.

In fine, learning and wisdom are not the same thing. "Knowledge comes," says Tennyson, "but wisdom lingers." It is this knowledge without wisdom—be its extent great or small—which is dangerous. And the reason is clear. Man is not a mere intellect, but a being endowed with a will—the centre of action, and a heart—the centre of emotions. It is only when the elements

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of his composite nature are balanced by the combined development of his intellectual and spiritual gifts that he is put in a position to extract that wisdom, which is the secret of true success, from any and all knowledge which opportunity or ability may bring to him.

### MUSIC.

*Points.*—Both a science and an art—Science of music—Art of music.

*Origin and Progress.*—Singing has been practised from the earliest ages—First known instruments were the drum, flute, and lyre—Musical knowledge of the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans—The art cultivated chiefly by the Church—Great musicians: Corelli, Gluck, Purcell, Handel, Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, and Beethoven.

*Effects.*—English people have always loved music—Natural aptitude for part singing—Greatest composers from Germany—Song lightens labour, cheers the suffering, refreshes the weary, and comforts the sad.

Music is both a science and an art. The science, or theory, of music explains the nature of musical sounds, shows how they are related to one another, and demonstrates their effects whether in a simple or combined state. The application of these principles to words, songs, and instruments, is termed the art of music.

Its origin is wrapped in mystery, but from the earliest ages men have given vent to their feelings in song, and have tried to imitate the human voice by artificial instruments. Probably the earliest instrument was the drum, then followed the flute, or wind instrument, and next the lyre, or stringed instrument. The Hebrews are many times described as singing songs of praise or exultation. Music formed a large part of their prescribed forms of worship and many instruments were played as accompaniments. The early Greeks understood the different variations of tone only to a limited extent. Their tones were not indicated by the position of the notes, but by names, and their music was of a simple character, mostly assuming the form of recitatives or chants.

The Romans copied the Greek mode of singing, but also devised simple musical instruments. It was the Christian Church, however, that first seriously cultivated the art, and the Gregorian chants were the earliest attempts to reduce music to a settled form. Then Guido of Arezzo represented tones by means of notes in lines and spaces. He was followed by Franco of Cologne, who made the notes of different shapes to indicate variations in time. Henceforward the progress of music was rapid, until Palestrina completed its structure. Then succeeded Corelli, Gluck, Purcell, and Dr Arne, Haydn, Handel, Mozart, and Spohr, who all in turn helped to advance the art of musical composition, which has been still further developed by later composers, such as Mendelssohn, Meyerbeer, Rossini, and Beethoven.

English people have always loved music, especially when set to ballads. It was in this form that stirring deeds of valour in the early days were handed down from father to son. They were sung in armed camps, on the eve of battle, in the hall when men caroused, and in the lady's bower. Englishmen seem to have a natural aptitude for part singing. The oldest known song of this kind is in the British Museum, it is called "Summer is i-comen in," and is dated as early as 1240.

Although England has not produced such pre-eminent composers as Germany, yet foreign musicians, whether composers or artistes, have always found a warm welcome with us and received hearty support. Handel's music we have made peculiarly our own, and his masterpiece, "The Messiah," has become part of our Christmas festival. Its grand choruses seem to be a fitting vehicle for the expression of thoughts and emotions which we cannot analyse or define, but which surge through the brain, intoxicate the senses, and flood the soul with divine ecstasy.

Song lightens labour, cheers the suffering, refreshes the weary, and comforts the sad. The blacksmith chants at his forge, the ploughman sings at his plough; singing is heard above the whirr of machinery and the rattle of the loom. The mother rocks her baby to sleep

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with a gentle lullaby ; triumphant strains rejoice over the bride ; and mournful dirges follow man to his last resting place.

#### A THUNDERSTORM.

*Points.*—Oppressive atmosphere—Quietness pervading all nature—Approach of the storm—Gathering clouds—Breeze rises but soon falls again—Nervous dread creeps upon one—Commencement of the storm—Low rumble heard—A flash of lightning suddenly follows—Thunder again and another vivid flash—The windows rattle noisily—Sky becomes darkened—Flash and peal follow in rapid succession—We feel helpless in the gloom—Rain-fall—A heavy downpour—Torrents—Streets Flooded—Abatement—Clouds break—Blue sky again appears—Breeze springs up—Thunder rumbling in the distance—Fresh and cool—Revival of nature.

All day the atmosphere has been oppressive. Heaviness and stillness pervade the air. The dark smoke from the chimneys curls lazily upward. A strange hush seems to have fallen on all nature. The birds have ceased to sing ; and we miss the buzz and hum of insects which have sought shelter in their mother earth, as if instinct had warned them of danger.

The clouds gather slowly on the horizon. Blacker and blacker they loom overhead. Still they press on, one wave compressed into another, until all are gathered in one black, inky mass. We wander restlessly about, for there is something very irritating as well as depressing in our surroundings. A breeze rises, but it sways the trees with strange weird sounds. Then it drops again. A low rumble is heard. This, we know, is the forerunner of a storm, so we seek a safe corner and wait.

Suddenly—almost without warning—a vivid flash of lightning well-nigh blinds us. The next instant a deafening peal of thunder shakes the building. The windows rattle noisily as the peal reverberates round and round the house. That flash has done mischief somewhere, we think. It is followed by another, so blue and vivid, that the room seems one blaze of flashing, darting

light. It grows darker, and the crack of the thunder follows still more quickly on the lightning's flash. How helpless we feel in the darkening, gathering gloom. We can but be still, and wait till the fury of the storm has spent itself.

Presently, to our great relief we hear the rain pattering on the window-pane. Down it comes in a heavy flood. It dances on the pavements, and streams up from the road as it pours down faster and faster. Streams of water fill the gutters on the wayside; the sewers cannot take the flood, and it rushes on gathering strength and force. Gradually the thunder abates its roar, and the lightning is less frequent. We can watch the play of the lightning against the dark sky with comfort now. How curious are the tricks it plays! Now it is a sharp fork of blue, now only like a faint streak across the clouds, and now it dances on the surface of the gloom, touching here, darting there, and flitting away like a sprite.

At length the clouds break, the blue sky peeps out, the wind rises, and a refreshing breeze steals over the land. The roar of the thunder has dropped to a sullen rumble. The lightning's flash has faded to a flicker on the horizon. Everything feels fresh and cool. The birds begin to sing again, and before long only the dripping branches and the rain-swept roads tell of the storm that has so lately left us.

## OUTLINES FOR ESSAYS.

### 1. THE LANDING OF COLUMBUS.

*Points.*—Hopes and fears of the voyage—Mutiny—Perseverance of Columbus—Land ahoy!—Speculations amongst sailors as to its nature and extent—Amazement of natives at Columbus's magnificent *Santa Maria*—Columbus wades through sea to shore bearing the cross aloft while his companions carry the flag of Spain—The discoverers fall on their knees on the beach and thank God—Cross and flag planted over new soil—Columbus

appeases natives with trinkets—Spaniards amazed at tropical fertility of new country—Columbus's discovery wonderful, but he did not realise how wonderful: he has really but touched the fringe of a new world.

## 2. THE ESSENTIALS OF GOOD BIOGRAPHY.

*Points.*—Biography literally the history of a man's life—Generally regarded as the account of a man's public career—Private life only touched on to throw light on that, or to bring out some traits in character—Undue emphasis on a man's private life wrong, *e.g.* Froude's *Carlyle*—On the other hand, no detail of public life, provided it be characteristic, out of place, *e.g.* Boswell's *Johnson*—Autobiography valuable, because it gives us the inner life of a man, *e.g.* Newman's *Apologia*—Biography should be (a) full; (b) impartial; (c) emphasis on turning points and characteristic traits; (d) avoid, on the one hand, mere hero-worship, *e.g.* Carlyle's *Cromwell*, and, on the other, mere fault-finding, *e.g.* O'Connor's *Disraeli*—"Paint me with all my warts," said Cromwell.

## 3. "READING MAKETH A FULL MAN, CONFERENCE A READY MAN, AND WRITING AN EXACT MAN."

*Points.*—Bacon here, as elsewhere, happy in his epigrams—Reading maketh the scholar a "full man"—"Conference," or as we should say, debate, the ready or fluent man, and writing, or the exercise of composition, the exact man—A man may be a scholar without being fluent—And a speaker may be fluent without being exact—Some great men have been at once "full men," "ready men," and "exact men," *e.g.* Cicero, and, in our own day, Macaulay and Gladstone—The balance of the three qualities is rare, however, and even in the cases cited is not perfect—Thus we speak of a man as a "mere rhetorician," implying that he is neither exact nor scholarly—The gifts that make the good orator are not generally those that form the good writer.

## 4. MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

*Points.*—Description of Mary Stuart, beautiful and unfortunate—Narrative of her career—Birth, December 8, 1542—Her father James V. dies a week afterwards—Negotiations for marriage with Prince Edward of England—State of Scotland at this time—Mary in France—Married to Dauphin, 1558—Queen of France—Her husband dies—Mary returns to Scotland—Rizzio and Darnley—Mary carried off by Bothwell—Abdicates in favour of James VI.—Parliament condemns her—Escapes from Lochleven Castle—Langside—At Court of England—Imprisonment—Trial and execution—Character, merits and defects.

## 5. THE CHARACTER OF MACBETH.

*Points.*—Ambition its leading trait—Not naturally vicious—Superstitious to a degree (witches)—Even when on the verge of crime lets “‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would’” —Vacillating of purpose—Spurred on by his wife—The strength of his remorse shows a character with much good in it—One crime leads him on to others—He thinks himself enmeshed in circumstances when it is his own overweening ambition that brings about all the tragedy of his life—When at bay desperate.

## 6. A SEA VOYAGE.

*Points.*—(1) Introduction—Description of port from which we sail. (Time of year, and purpose of journey might be given, if thought desirable.)

(2) Course of journey—Direction, objects and places passed—Weather—Sea—Character of coast. (Description of crew and passengers should be given if writing about a long sea voyage.)

(3) Destination—Approach of destination—Brief description.

## 7. GOLF.

*Points.*—(1) History and origin—National game of Scotland—Played there over 500 years—Styled “Royal game of Golf”—Edicts against it.

(2) Imported from Holland—*Kolf* a Dutch word—Introduced into England by James I.

(3) Description—Where played—Grass short and soil sandy—Gutta-percha balls—Clubs—"Teeing" ground—Holes—"Putting green".

(4) *Pros and Cons*—Manly game—Open-air exercise—Not a violent exercise—Suitable to old and young—Expensive, and therefore confined to the wealthier classes.

## 8. A PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION.

*Points.*—(1) Introduction. (a) Parliamentary Divisions. (b) Length of Parliament—Septennial Act. (c) Reason for a General Election. (2) Election campaign. (a) Selection of candidates. (b) Political activity—Meetings—Canvassers—Placards—Addresses. (3) Polling day—Booths—Voting by ballot—Presiding officials—Hours of polling—Collection of boxes. (4) Declaration of poll—Counting in Town Hall—Intense excitement—Thanks to Returning Officer—Declaration to crowd outside—Speeches.

## 9. PHOTOGRAPHY.

*Points.*—(1) Definition and explanation—Producing pictures by the action of light and chemicals—Camera—Lens—Picture on screen—"Dry plate" sensitised—Developing negative. (2) History of photography—Invention of camera obscura—Chief developments during nineteenth century—Niepce and Daguerre in France, and Fox Talbot in England made great discoveries—"Wet collodion process" in 1851—Invention of dry plates. (3) Uses—Professional photographers—Amateur—Line and tone blocks—Biograph—Useful to astronomers.

## 10. COTTON MANUFACTURE.

*Points.*—(1) Its origin—Woven by the Chinese and Hindus centuries ago—Introduced into England in

seventeenth century from the Netherlands. (2) The factory or mill—Spinning mill, plain rectangular block with five or six storeys—Tall chimney—Card, doubling, and spinning rooms—Workers. (3) Stages or processes of manufacture. (a) Raw cotton, removing impurities—Scutching—Lap. (b) Carding machine—Slivers. (c) Doubling frame—Slivers combined—Cops or hanks. (d) Weaving shed—Lights in the roof—One storey—Warping—Sizing—Weaving. (4) Results—Prosperity of Lancashire—Value of the manufacture, £100,000,000 annually.

### 11. VISIT TO A MUSEUM.

*Points.*—(1) Introduction. (a) Definition (general); (b) Purpose or use. (2) The Building. (a) Exterior—Appearance—Style; (b) Interior—Suitability. (3) Contents of museum. (a) *Ground Floor*—Minerals and rocks—Diamond mine—Fossils illustrating animal life—Fossils of the Tertiary Period. (b) *First Floor*—Specimens illustrating the early history of Egypt, Greece, Australia, and America. (c) *Second Floor*—Natural history section—Botanical specimens, mammals, reptiles, insects, birds, butterflies—Very instructive and interesting.

### 12. THE INTELLIGENCE OF LOWER ANIMALS.

*Points.*—Intelligence usually and properly confined to man—The instinct of lower animals—Its strength very great, *e.g.*, in elephants, dogs and bees—Faculty of imitation strong in animals, *e.g.* monkey—Anecdotes—Instincts of animals can be trained, *e.g.*, (a) performing animals; (b) amongst dogs, setters, pointers, retrievers—Instinct of animals, no matter how great, no evidence of intelligence or reasoning power, in the strict sense of the word—The very perfection of instinct against any such conclusion—No architect, given the material, could construct so admirable a structure as a honey-comb.

## 13. THE STUDY OF LANGUAGES.

*Points.*—Has many advantages, both for practical ends and as a training of the mind—The study of a foreign language gives us an insight into how other people express ideas—Idiom is something characteristic in each people—Improves our power of thought by impressing value of clearness and conciseness. Above all opens up to us another literature, the full meaning and spirit of which cannot be grasped in a translation—Makes us appreciate our own literature better by contrast—On the practical side, of great value (a) in commerce; (b) in travel.

## 14. KINDNESS TO ANIMALS.

*Points.*—Lower animals created for man's use—Though, strictly speaking, animals have no *rights*, it is our duty not to maltreat them—Kindness due to them as part of God's creation—Evidence, as a rule, of a good disposition—Notable exceptions—Some of the greatest tyrants, *e.g.* Caligula and Robespierre, noted for their kindness to animals—Kindness can be carried too far, *e.g.*, when we neglect the suffering of our fellow-men while pampering animals—Vivisection, in the interests of science, admissible where no unnecessary cruelty practised.

## 15. THE DAILY NEWSPAPER.

*Points.*—The desire of news a permanent element in human nature—The daily paper, as we know it, made possible by the invention of movable type and the telegraph—Has become a necessity of our political, social, and commercial life—Readers do not usually think of the complexity of labour involved in its production—Familiarity has lessened wonder, and in some cases bred contempt—Daily paper contains "history in the making"—Its dangers: (a) loss of time in endeavouring

to know all the news; (b) much of it merely of ephemeral or sensational interest; (c) all kinds of principles can be advocated to the injury of the public—Advantages: (a) can champion freedom and other good causes; (b) can be made vehicle for dissemination of sound principles.

#### 16. TRAMWAYS.

*Points.*—The tram grew out of the needs of modern city life and growth of suburbs—Its advantage to hard-worked citizens—Suburban life possible for people of moderate means—Though a boon also a source of possible extravagance—Pound wise and penny foolish—Tramway v. Railway for city traffic—Advantages of the former—The motive power of the future—Electricity an ideal power for city trams.

#### 17. A WINTER LANDSCAPE.

*Points.*—Each season has a beauty of its own—The charms of a winter landscape less obvious than those of nature in other seasons—Description of scene from cottage door—mountains—sky—valley—trees—skating-pond—winding river—Hoar-frost as foreground of landscape—Reflection of sunset in windows—Change of scene after sun-down.

#### 18. BRITISH WILD FLOWERS.

*Points.*—(1) Profusion—The appearance of the meadows in spring and summer when flowers in bloom—Numerous as the stars. (2) Variety—Without limit to the botanist—The ordinary observer regards them as weeds. (3) Beauty of colour—Not gay in colour—buttercups and dandelion the most brilliant—Their colours stand out most when viewed in their natural setting—The colours give pleasure to the eye—Serve also as guides to insects. (4) Structure—Very interesting—Each variety a little world in itself—calyx, corolla,

stamens, ovary. (5) *Fragrance*—Not many are fragrant—The violet an exception. (6) *Uses*—Produce seeds for future plants—Provide nectar for myriads of insects.

### 19. HOME SWEET HOME.

*Points.*—(1) Strength and character of love of home. (2) Reasons for intensity; (a) connected with affection for parents and brothers and sisters; (b) our earliest and strongest associations centre round home; (c) best influences of our life prevail there. (3) Love of home universal and undying—"Here to return and die at home at last"—The negro's "old folks at home". (4) We study the homes and early haunts of great men to account for the leading traits of their character. (5) Patriotism but an extended love of home—The home of the race.

### LIST OF SUBJECTS FOR ESSAYS.

The student should carefully read over the lives of the following, as they have been frequently set at examinations, and afterwards write them in *OUTLINE*. It is important, too, to keep up-to-date with current events in order to be prepared to write an essay upon the life of any famous person who may have died recently.

**Rulers.**—Queen Victoria, Alfred the Great, Queen Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots, Oliver Cromwell, President McKinley, President Roosevelt, King Edward VII.

**Statesmen.**—Peel, Pitt, Gladstone, Disraeli, Paul Kruger, Lord Milner, Lord Selborne, General Louis Botha.

**Literary Names.**—Milton, Dr. Johnson, Macaulay, Goldsmith, Shakespeare, Bacon, Scott, Tennyson, Longfellow, Raleigh, Dickens, Cowper, Ruskin, Burke.

**Soldiers and Sailors.**—Nelson, Wellington, Napoleon, Blake, Clive, Hastings, Gordon, Cook, Drake, Roberts, Kitchener.

**Scientists and Inventors.**—Darwin, Huxley, Davy, Edison, Arkwright, Watt, Josiah Wedgwood, Stephenson, Marconi, Bell.

**Travellers.**—Livingstone, Nansen, Franklin, Shackleton, Peary.

**Miscellaneous.**—John Howard, Florence Nightingale, Joan of Arc.

### NOTES.

The title of a biographical essay admits of three forms, thus:—

- (a) An account of the **LIFE OF QUEEN VICTORIA.**
- (b) Describe the **CHARACTER OF QUEEN VICTORIA.**
- (c) Write an **ESSAY ON QUEEN VICTORIA.**

The first of these would be a narration of the chief events of the life of the Queen with a brief description of character.

The second would relate only such incidents as would illustrate the chief points of her character.

The third title allows wider scope of treatment. Her life and character, her position as a ruler, and as a woman may be given.

#### 1.

(In dealing with the following subjects a suitable order would be—1. Place in nature; 2. Contrast (if any) with others of the same species; 3. Formation of parts—powers; 4. Habits; 5. Utilities.)

Ostrich	Lion
Horse	Elephant
Dog	Oak
Snake	Wheat
Rabbit	Barley
Bird	Potato
Ant	

#### 2.

(A suitable order in dealing with the following subjects would be—1. Appearance (nature); 2. Where found

(or where produced or discovered); 3. How procured (or manufactured); 4. Uses; 5. How it has affected men and society.)

Coal	Silk
Iron	Lucerne
Gold	Plough
Diamond	Clock
Gunpowder	Thermometer
Steam	Telescope
Electricity	Printing press
Diving-bell	Mariner's compass.
Balloon	

(In descriptions follow some fixed order. Begin with some central or prominent feature or aspect, and then take in successively the others as they are grouped around it.)

A summer sunset.	Ascent of a mountain.
A snow storm.	A lake.
A spring morning.	The clouds.
Sea-shore.	A cricket match.
A country walk.	A farm house.
A great city.	A village.
A river bank.	A football match.

(In narrative follow the order of the facts you are narrating. If you are dealing with an event of history, or the career of an individual, state—1. The facts in their order; 2. The causes (or motives) which underlay them; 3. How these causes worked; 4. What circumstances aided or hindered them; 5. To what results they led.)

Fable of the Fox and the Crow.	W. E. Gladstone.
Parable of the Good Samaritan.	Byron.
Lord Ullin's Daughter.	Washington.
Discovery of America.	Julius Cæsar.
	St. Paul.
	Joan of Arc.

Magna Charta.	Mary Queen of Scots.
William the Conqueror.	Hannibal.
Cromwell.	The Fall of Carthage.
Charles I.	Death of Nelson.

(In discussing the following subjects we might adopt some such order as—1. The meaning (and origin, if a quotation) of the principle. 2. Different ways in which it may be understood or applied. 3. Reasons for or against. 4. Quote any writers we can in support of our view. 5. Refer to any examples from history (or our own experience) which illustrate our position.)

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

"Order is heaven's first law."

"Knowledge is power."

"Sweet are the uses of adversity."

"God made the country, man made the town."

"The child is father to the man."

"This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

#### ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS FOR COMPOSITION.

Influence of music.	Conscience.
Uses of history.	A picnic.
Importance of trifles.	Out-door games.
Punctuality.	"Fortune favours the brave."
Instinct of animals.	Does education diminish crime?
Good temper.	Trial by jury.
Dreams.	Democracy.
The daily newspaper.	Good and evil influences of theatres.
Public opinion.	Description of a sea-port.
Athletics.	Describe your favourite hero in fiction.
War.	Fairies and fairy lore.
The "Good Old Times".	Philanthropy.
Power of habit.	
The penny post.	
Patriotism.	
Kindness to animals.	

Railways.  
Union is strength.  
Enthusiasm.  
Avarice.  
Thrift.  
A farmer's life.  
A soldier's life.  
A miner's life.  
Printing.

Advantages of travel.  
Homes of the poor.  
What is liberty?  
A life at sea.  
Golf.  
A visit to a museum.  
Ancient and modern war.  
Photography.  
Advantages and disadvantages of competition.

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